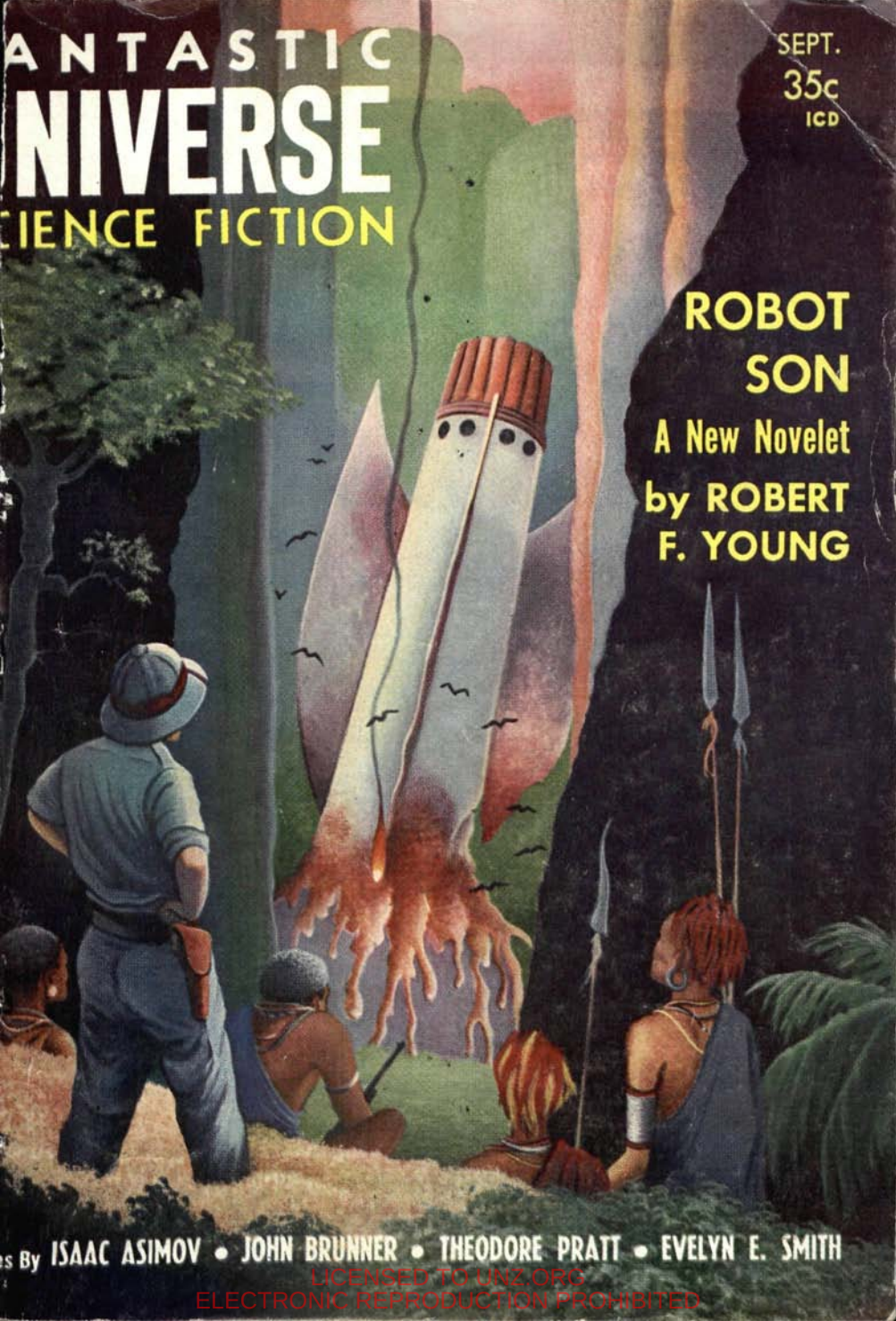

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CRASH IN THE FOREST

IT'D TAKEN three years to build the ship.

It'd taken three minutes to crash.

David Carter, District Officer, Tondaleyo District, in whose area the *Hermann Oberth* had just crashed, was sure these things were planned—somewheres (who could tell where?)—just to make life more interesting. The sweat running down his face, his shirt clinging to his back, his air-filter plugs forgotten in the excitement—the air wasn't too bad, anyway—he stood there in the forest that was so much like the forest Great-Grandfather David must have known in Africa, and cursed—cursed a blue streak that brought a ripple of pleased chuckles from the natives who surrounded him. They hadn't the slightest idea of what he was saying, but it sounded really lovely. . . .

It was times like these when he wondered why he'd ever left Brooklyn.

It was rough to be cursed with a Great-Grandfather who'd left his name in books nobody read. It was rougher to be cursed with a grandfather who'd been one of the first to volunteer as Space was opening up, *and* a father who'd been born on Luna Colony and never stopped talking about it!

He wanted so badly to get away from this incessant chatter about Great-Grandfather David who'd surveyed the Mountains of the Moon (or done *something* with them), *and* Grandfather Oscar (*dear* Grandfather Oscar!) who'd been one of the first to pioneer, *and* the old bore himself, who could never get used to the moving streets and to the deep canyons that sheltered the four million people who'd crowded into Brooklyn. It was his "sacred duty" to serve abroad, the old fool had kept saying—fine enough if abroad had meant what it once did, but not so good when it meant, as it did these days, the other side of Venus. . . .

It'd been a conspiracy! Father must have talked to some old friend in the Service! They'd obviously realized the sort of man he was—somebody *must* have recognized the name—and still they'd sent him down to this uncivilized part of Venus, in charge of this auto-radar station and told to wet-nurse a lot of ignorant natives who couldn't be bothered to learn English so you had to learn this so-called language of theirs instead!

No conveniences in the blasted residency of course. No temp-conditioning. No nothing, in fact. Just bare walls—and a list of regulations that you were supposed to learn by heart, and the visi-phone, for use when it was necessary to report back to Ley Base.

Well. Something *had* happened for a change! The *Oberth* had crashed. Hed'd recognized it from the tri-di he'd seen back at Base.

He'd better get back to the residency, he supposed, and report.

Blast it all, anyway! He'd been *right* in the middle of a new whodunit by Ivan Rowe when the siren had sounded!

What pages *was* it anyway?

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THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!

TRY it some time. Concentrate intently upon another person seated in a room with you, without his noticing it. Observe him gradually become restless and finally turn and look in your direction. Simple—yet it is a *positive demonstration* that thought generates a mental energy which can be projected from your mind to the consciousness of another. Do you realize how much of your success and happiness in life depend upon your influencing others? Is it not important to you to have others understand your point of view—to be receptive to your proposals?

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FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

SEPTEMBER 1959
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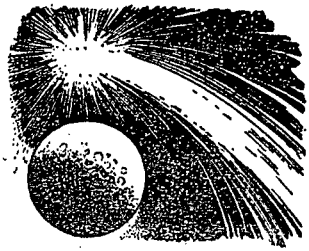

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rain, rain, go away

by . . . Isaac Asimov

It was hard to get to know the Sakkaros. They kept so to themselves. It was all so strange. . . .

"THERE she is again," said Lillian Wright, as she adjusted the venetian blinds carefully. "There she is, George."

"There who is," asked her husband, trying to get satisfactory contrast on the TV so that he might settle down to the ball game.

"Mrs. Sakkaro," she said, and then, to forestall her husband's inevitable 'Who's that?' added hastily, "The new neighbors, for goodness sake."

"Oh."

"Sunbathing. Always sunbathing. I wonder where her boy is. He's usually out on a nice day like this, standing in that tremendous yard of theirs and throwing the ball against the house. Did you ever see him, George?"

"I've heard him. It's a version of the Chinese water torture. Bang on the wall, biff on the ground smack in the hand. Bang, biff, smack, bang, biff—"

"He's a *nice* boy, quiet and well-behaved. I wish Tommie would make friends with him. He's the right age, too, just about ten, I should say."

Dr. Isaac Asimov is, of course, a biochemist working in cancer research. He is also the originator of the "three basic laws of robotics" and, to quote Judith Merril, "the world's foremost (fictional) authority on the Positronic brain and 'robopsychology'." Very, very popular in SF fandom, "Ike" will, of course, serve as Toastmaster at the Detention Banquet *this Labor Day weekend.*

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"I didn't know Tommie was backward about making friends."

"Well, it's hard with the Sakkaros. They keep so to themselves. I don't even know what Mr. Sakkaro does."

"Why should you? It's not really anyone's business what he does."

"It's odd that I never see him go to work."

"No one ever sees me go to work."

"You stay home and write. What does *he* do?"

"I dare say Mrs. Sakkaro knows what Mr. Sakkaro does and is all upset because she doesn't know what *I* do."

"Oh, George." Lillian retreated from the window and glanced with distaste at the television. (Schoendienst was at bat.) "I think we should make an effort; the neighborhood should."

"What kind of an effort?" George was comfortable on the couch now, with a king-size Coke in his hand, freshly opened and frosted with moisture.

"To get to know them."

"Well, didn't you when she first moved in? You said you called."

"I said hello but, well, she'd just moved in and the house was still upset so that's all it could be, just hello. It's been two months now and it's still nothing more than hello, sometmes. —She's so odd."

"Is she?"

"She's always looking at the sky; I've seen her do it a hundred times and she's never been out when it's the least bit cloudy. Once, when the boy was out playing, she called to him to come in, shouting that it was going to rain. I happened to hear her and I thought, Good Lord, wouldn't you know and me with a wash on the line, so I hurried out and, you know, it was broad sunlight. Oh, there were some clouds, but nothing, really."

"Did it rain, eventually?"

"Of course not. I just had to run out in the yard for nothing."

George was lost amid a couple of basehits and a most embarrassing bobble that meant a run. When the excitement was over and the pitcher was trying to regain his composure, George called out after Lillian, who was vanishing into the kitchen, "Well, since they're from Arizona, I dare say they don't know raincloud from any other kind."

Lillian came back into the living-room with a patter of high heels. "From where?"

"From Arizona, according to Tommie."

"How did Tommie know?"

"He talked to their boy, in between ball-chucks, I guess, and he told Tommie they came from Arizona; then the boy was called in. At least, Tommie says it might have been Arizona or maybe Alabama or someplace like that. You know Tommie and his non-total recall. But if they're that nervous about the weather, I guess its Ari-

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zona and they don't know what to make of a good rainy climate like ours."

"But why didn't you ever tell me?"

"Because Tommie only told me this morning and because I thought he must have told you already and, to tell the absolute truth, because I thought you could just manage to drag out a normal existence even if you never found out. Wow—"

The ball went sailing into the right field stands and that was that for the pitcher.

Lillian went back to the venetian blinds and said, "I'll simply just have to make her acquaintance. She looks *very* nice.—Oh, Lord, look at that, George."

George was looking at nothing but the TV.

Lillian said, "I know she's staring at that cloud. And now she'll be going in. Honestly."

George was out two days later on a reference-search in the library and came home with a load of books. Lillian greeted him jubilantly.

She said, "Now, you're not doing anything tomorrow."

"That sounds like a statement, not a question."

"It *is* a statement. We're going out with the Sakkaro's to Murphy's park."

"With—"

"With the next-door neighbors, George. *How* can you never remember the name?"

"I'm gifted. How did it happen?"

"I just went up to their house this morning and rang the bell."

"That easy?"

"It wasn't easy. It was hard. I stood there, jittering, with my finger on the doorbell, till I thought that ringing the bell would be easier than having the door open and being caught standing there like a fool."

"And she didn't kick you out?"

"No. she was sweet as she could be. Invited me in, knew who I was, said she was so glad I had come to visit. *You* know."

"And you suggested we go to Murphy's park."

"Yes. I thought if I suggested something that would let the children have fun, it would be easier for her to go along with it. She wouldn't want to spoil a chance for her boy."

"A mother's psychology."

"But you should see her home."

"Ah. You had a reason for all this. It comes out. You wanted the Cook's tour. But, please, spare me the color-scheme details. I'm not interested in the bed-spreads, and the size of the closets is a topic with which I can dispense."

It was the secret of their happy marriage that Lillian paid no attention to George. She went into the color-scheme details; was most meticulous about the bed-spreads and gave him an inch-by-inch description of closet-size.

"And *clean?* I have never in my

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life seen any place so spotless."

"If you get to know her, then, she'll be setting you impossible standards and you'll have to drop her in self-defense."

"Her kitchen," said Lillian, ignoring him, "was so spanking clean, you just couldn't believe she ever used it. I asked for a drink of water and she held the glass underneath the tap and poured slowly so that not one drop fell in the sink itself. It wasn't affectation. She did it so casually, that I just knew she always did it that way. And when she gave me the glass she held it with a clean napkin. Just hospital-sanitary."

"She must be a lot of trouble to herself. Did she agree to come with us right off?"

"Well— Not right off. She called to her husband about what the weather forecast was, and he said that the newspapers all said it would be fair tomorrow but that he was waiting for the latest report on the radio."

"*All* the newspapers said so, eh?"

"Of course, they all just print the official weather forecast, so they would all agree. But I think they do subscribe to all the newspapers. At least I've watched the bundle the newsboy leaves—"

"There isn't much you miss, is there?"

"Anyway," said Lillian, severely, "she called up the Weather Bureau and had them tell her the latest and she called it out to her husband. They said they'd go, except they said they'd phone us if there were any unexpected changes in the weather."

"All right. Then we'll go."

The Sakkaros were young and pleasant, dark and handsome. In fact, as they came down the long walk from their home to where the Wright automobile was parked, George leaned toward his wife and breathed into her ear, "So *he's* the reason."

"I wish he were," said Lillian. "Is that a handbag he's carrying?"

"Pocket-radio. To listen to weather-forcasts, I bet."

The Sakkaro boy came running after them, waving something which turned out to be an aneroid barometer and all three got into the back seat. Conversation was turned on and lasted, with neat give-and-take on impersonal subjects, to Murphy's Park.

The Sakkaro boy was so polite and reasonable that even Tommie Wright, wedged between his parents in the front seat, was subdued by example into a semblance of civilization. Lillian couldn't recall when she had spent so serenely pleasant a drive.

She was not the least disturbed by the fact that, barely to be heard under the flow of the conversation, Mr. Sakkaro's small radio was on, and she never actually saw him put it occasionally to his ear.

It was a beautiful day at Murphy's Park; hot and dry without being too hot; and with a cheerfully

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bright sun in a blue, blue sky. Even Mr. Sakkaro, though he inspected every quarter of the heavens with a careful eye and then stared piercingly at the barometer, seemed to have no fault to find.

Lillian ushered the two boys to the amusement section and bought enough tickets to allow one ride for each on every variety of centrifugal thrill that the park offered.

"Please," she said to a protesting Mrs. Sakkaro, "let this be my treat. I'll let you have your turn next time."

When she returned, George was alone. "Where—" she began.

"Just down there at the refreshment stand. I told them I'd wait here for you and we would join them." He sounded gloomy.

"Anything wrong?"

"No, not really, except that I think he must be independently wealthy."

"What?"

"I don't know what he does for a living. I hinted—"

"Now who's curious?"

"I was doing it for you. He said he's just a student of human nature."

"How philosophical. That would explain all those newspapers."

"Yes, but with a handsome wealthy man next-door, it looks as though I'll have impossible standards set for me, too."

"Don't be silly."

"And he doesn't come from Arizona."

"He doesn't?"

"I said I heard he was from Arizona. He looked so surprised, it was obvious he didn't. Then he laughed and asked if he had an Arizona accent."

Lillian said, thoughfully, "He has some kind of accent, you know. There are lots of Spanish-ancestry people in the southwest, so he could still be from Arizona. Sakkaro could be a Spanish name."

"Sounds Japanese to me. —Come on, they're waving. Oh, good Lord, look what they've bought."

The Sakkaros were each holding three sticks of "cotton candy," huge swirls of pink foam consisting of threads of sugar dried out of frothy syrup that had been whipped about in a warm vessel. It melted sweetly in the mouth and left one feeling sticky.

The Sakkaros held one out to each Wright, and out of politeness, the Wrights accepted.

They went down the midway, tried their hands at darts, at the kind of poker game where balls were rolled into holes, at knocking wooden cylinders off pedestals. They took pictures of themselves and recorded their voices and tested the strength of their hand-grips.

Eventually, they collected the youngsters who had been reduced to a satisfactorily breathless state of roiled-up insides and the Sakkaros ushered theirs off instantly to the refreshment-stand. Tommie hinted the extent of his pleasure at the possible purchase of a hot-dog and

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George tossed him a quarter. He ran off, too.

"Frankly," said George, "I prefer to stay here. If I see them biting away at another cotton candy stick, I'll turn green and sicken on the spot. If they haven't had a dozen apiece, I'll eat a dozen myself."

"I know and they're buying a handful for the child now."

"I offered to stand Sakkaro a hamburger and he just looked grim and shook his head. Not that a hamburger's much, but after enough cotton candy, it ought to be a feast."

"I know. I offered her an orange drink and the way she jumped when she said no, you'd think I'd thrown it in her face. —Still, I suppose they've never been to a place like this before and they'll need time to adjust to the novelty. They'll fill up on cotton candy and then never eat it again for ten years."

"Well, maybe." They strolled toward the Sakkaros. "You know, Lil, it's clouding up."

Mr. Sakkaro had the radio to his ear and was looking anxiously toward the west.

"Uh-oh," said George, "he's seen it. One gets you fifty, he'll want to go home."

All three Sakkaros were upon him, polite but insistent. They were sorry, they had had a wonderful time, a marvellous time, the Wrights would have to be their guests as soon as it could be managed, but now, really, they had to go home. It looked stormy. Mrs. Sakkaro wailed that all the forecasts had been for fair weather.

George tried to console them. "It's hard to predict a local thunderstorm, but even if it were to come, and it mightn't, it wouldn't last more than half an hour on the outside."

At which comment, the Sakkaro youngster seemed on the verge of tears and Mrs. Sakkaro's hand, holding a handkerchief, trembled visibly.

"Let's go home," said George in resignation.

The drive back seemed to stretch interminably. There was no conversation to speak of. Mr. Sakkaro's radio was quite loud now as he switched from station to station, catching a weather report every time. They were mentioning "local thundershowers" now.

The Sakkaro youngster piped up that the barometer was falling and Mrs. Sakkaro, chin in the palm of her hand, stared dolefully at the sky and asked if George could not drive faster, please.

"It does look rather threatening, doesn't it?" said Lillian in a polite attempt to share their guests' attitudes. But then, George heard her mutter, "Honestly!" under her breath.

A wind had sprung up, driving the dust of the weeks-dry road before it, when they entered the street on which they lived, and the leaves

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rustled ominously. Lightning flickered.

George said, "You'll be indoors in two minutes, friends. We'll make it."

He pulled up at the gate that opened onto the Sakkaro's spacious front yard and got out of the car to open the back door. He thought he felt a drop. They were *just* in time.

The Sakkaros tumbled out, faces drawn with tension muttering thanks, and started up their long front-walk at a dead run.

"Honestly," began Lillian, "you would think they were—"

The heavens opened and the rain came down in giant drops as though some celestial dam had suddenly burst. The top of their car was pounded with a hundred drumsticks and half-way to their front door the Sakkaros stopped and looked despairingly upward.

Their faces blurred as the rain hit; blurred and shrank and ran together. All three shrivelled, collapsing within their clothes, which sank down into three sticky-wet heaps.

And while the Wrights sat there, transfixed with horror, Lillian found herself unable to stop the completion of her remark: "—made of sugar and afraid they would melt."

NEXT ISSUE—

BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

—an unpublished Gavagan's Bar story
by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt

HALLOWEEN FOR MR. FAULKNER, by August Derleth

THE GIRL IN THE BOTTLE, by A. J. Budrys

LIFE FORM FROM OUTER SPACE, by Maria Baxter

and

CONDEMNED TO DEATH

An Exciting New Novelet by POUL ANDERSON

—in FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

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the round trip

by . . . John Brunner

The computers at Oyalet gave them the answer, and located for them the point where it all began.

TO THE most noble, most magnanimous and most beautiful of evolved creatures, the Lady Lireel bez Hamath, I, Darak bez Hamath, send greetings and these words by my own hand. Hail—and farewell!

Forgive me, wife, for addressing you as though you were a stranger; forgive me for the agony which will come into your eyes when you take this letter from the hand of its bearer, who is, after all, myself, and know that I am indeed writing as the stranger which I have become. It is a long farewell which I must take of you, the longest that any man ever took of his beloved, and yet it is with the certainty that we shall meet again. Indeed, in a manner of speaking, when you read these very words we shall already have met again. In a manner of speaking . . .

Where was the beginning? In what deity-forsaken pit of primeval time did I decree for myself this torment—and for you? But—

Oh, Lireel, my darling, I sit here looking at your portrait, where it stands on the communicator, and know that I could call you and see your features move in reality, instead of in that eternal delightful smile

John Brunner, author of the recent THE NUMBER OF MY DAYS (F. U., *March 1959) wrote, some months ago, how he felt that this story was "utterly different from anything I've done in years." You will agree, we feel, that while this may be so, it is also additional proof of his increasing stature in this field.*

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which the artist captured and prisoned in that cube yonder. But I dare not; I would rather remember you smiling, even if the memory is of a poor shadow of your true self, than remember you as you would look were I to call and speak to you . . .

Let me marshal my thoughts if I can. Let me recount the things you already know in order to prepare you for what you do not yet know—and indeed for what I myself do not yet know, but am even so certain of beyond the chance of doubt.

Do you remember our last day together a-planet? The day when we took the children to look at the cradle of our race? That was a lesson you had been saying for a long time we ought to teach them; I had held back, maintaining that their minds were too youthful and unformed for them to withstand the shock as yet. And that day you prevailed; I yielded for your sake although I knew that it would cast a shadow of melancholy over our parting.

It must have been a beautiful world once, that planet where our stock was born. Even now it has its own sad loveliness, which I think I saw reflected in the children's eyes when at last they understood what had happened there. The pain and agony which the sight of that scarred Earth still evokes in the human brain after—how long do the archeologists say? Eleven thousand years? And yet for every one of those years more than a thousand human beings, creatures at least a little like ourselves, died, in lingering agony.

It is a memory we like to flee from, when we can; at our parting, I suspect that I was almost glad to flee from the image of that memory mirrored in your eyes, and the children's.

Yet it is always with us. Maybe it was the original root cause of our need to know, our need to understand and comprehend the universe in which we find ourselves. But the day will come—sooner for you than for me, by a very long way—when mankind will have to find another motive for continuing to live, because it is within our grasp to know everything—literally and without qualification everything—about the cosmos.

I took you and the children to Oyalet before I left, to see the computers there, and I remember your little shiver when you first really felt in your bones that here was the analogue of the universe. It is a gigantic concept, isn't it? The peak and perfection of nearly two millennia of concentrated effort have fruited on Oyalet. In the beginning, they were satisfied to cope with every particle of matter in our own galaxy, tracing back its history to the moment of the Ultimate Origin. But before they reached that point they had to start taking into account the other galaxies, and decided there was nothing for it but to build an analogy for the cosmos entire.

The observations! The life-time-long excursions into the uttermost corners of the universe at speeds so

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great that we overtook time itself and could look—from a distance—at our own galaxy in its youthful prime! And the analysis of the results! It staggers the mind.

And consequently we know the answer to a problem which has baffled the best intelligences since before the dawn of history. At many stages of our growing knowledge, it seemed that the very problem was itself meaningless, although it is recorded of the prehistoric sage Newton that he suspected the point of absolute relative non-motion might be found among the stars, which at that time his people had no means of visiting.

But the computers at Oyalet gave us the answer, and located for us the point at which there is an equal amount of matter plus velocity—of energy, one might say — in every conceivable direction. Insofar as the term has any meaning at all, which it strictly speaking hasn't, one might say that "here" is the point at which it all began: you, me, the planet Earth, Oyalet, Sirius, and the other galaxies . . . This point, this theoretical location in space, is on the empty world-line once occupied by the primal ylem.

"Here"—within a few thousand miles of this room where I am writing to you.

If it wasn't so important to us, as human beings, to *know* beyond a shadow of doubt, to verify with our direct perceptions what is predicted by our tools the computers, we would never have troubled to come here. But we did, expecting, I may say, to find exactly what we had been told we should find—*nothing*.

I remember so clearly that it almost blinds me to the page on which I am setting these inadequate words down, how we assembled in the observation room to—well, to look at that nothing we expected to find. Illogical; but we as a species have never been noteworthy for our logical behavior.

As you well know, there are six ships in the expedition, identified to one another by hyperspatial links, and aboard them I have about fourteen thousand picked men and women, experts to the last. I have never been director of an expedition which so satisfied me; which so impressed me with the unison wave of excitement and enthusiasm which boiled up during the course of the uneventful journey. Somewhere deep in our minds it must have sprung from the sense of triumph —from the feeling that we puny material creatures, for all our mistakes, had unfailingly pursued our quarry to its lair: the *fons et origo* of the very matter in which we consist.

I remember saying to Incoratchuatar, my assistant — whom you haven't met, but who will doubtless visit you after this trip—that if our predictions were verified, we should have a deal of trouble gathering more data after this in order to base yet other predictions. He laughed, as if the idea was new to him; then he frowned, and after that he went

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away quietly, to come back in a few hours' time with a plan for testing the predictions resulting from running the Oyalet computers in reverse.

You will doubtless at once see what he was getting at. We had traced back the motion of every particle in the detectable universe, in the plenum, to its common point of origin. Conversely, we could extrapolate from these observed motions—we had all the necessary information by now—in order to find out what will be the end.

"In my spare time," said Incoratchuatar—and this I may say amused me, for he is the most dedicated man I have ever met, having neither family nor recreations (which was why they passed him over and selected me to be director of the expedition despite my actually inferior record of achievement in purely scientific fields)—"in my spare time," and he blinked as if aware of my amusement, "I have worked out two possible ends for the universe. One cannot grasp sufficient factors to decide between them. Possibly, the recession from the point of Ultimate Origin will continue, until energy is so diluted in space and time that every particle in effect is contained in a universe of its own, having receded from every other particle to the point at which it cannot influence any other; and this, although indicated by some trends, seems inherently unlikely unless some agency other than simple recession dilutes available gravitational force past the point at which any agglomeration of matter like a star or planet can exist . . . Or the universe may be a closed continuum, so that after a very long time, indeed, it—turns a corner, to use an obvious metaphor, and the recession without changing its direction becomes an approach, and brings all matter and energy back to its point of origin. Time and space would close in with them; at the last, there would again be only ylem, surrounded by emptiness so complete that it would possess not even the property of existence."

Into the silence in which we were contemplating the nature of such emptiness broke a voice—that of our chief pilot. He spoke in the deliberately controlled tones in which men always announce momentous news, as that of a death or disaster.

You must remember that we were closing in on the point where we expected to find nothing; we were waiting for the sensitive instruments which indicated the relative amounts of energy existing in all directions from us to quaver into the absolute dead center of their mountings. And it was at this moment that the pilot said, "Director, there is a spaceship ahead of us."

We didn't believe it at first, naturally. Kopdet, the pilot, informed me afterwards that he had been observing it for some seconds before he concluded that the thing ahead *could* only be a spaceship, despite the fact that it was perfectly spherical and incredibly highly reflective.

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And a spaceship it was. We closed to within two hundred miles of it, puzzling, and sent our six ships into orbit about it as if it had been a planet. For it was gigantic! I had imagined our own ships to be large, with their crews of more than two thousand apiece, but this thing could have qualified as a planetoid. It was—well, it was like a sort of marker. It was balanced precisely at the center of the universe. It had exactly the same amount of matter and energy on every side of it.

Someone had known we were coming, I thought to myself, but I didn't utter the thought to Incoratchuatar. He was thunderstruck as he contemplated the—the object.

And it was only after a half-hour of silent amazement—shared by everyone in the expedition, I believe—that he turned to me and spoke in a shaky voice. "Director, I had been envisaging just such a means of verifying our—our other predictions."

I told him to make himself clearer, while we waited to see if the spaceship would react to the arrival of strangers. He stumbled and was confused, but the gist of what he was saying was this: that given the time, and the effort, and the desire to know (all of which we human beings have in abundance) it would be possible to design and build a spaceship. Only not just a spaceship—a device that would be able to withstand billions on billions of years of waiting, so that if the universe was cyclical, if one infinitely distant day the stars crashed together again, it would survive to tell—the next visitors.

To tell—us!

If Incoratchuatar's inspired guess was correct, this spaceship around which we orbited was exactly as old as the universe itself; it had been placed here—last time around—to await the arrival of someone else who wanted to know about the fate in store.

Or it had been placed here more recently, during this universal cycle, by another race with the same aims as mankind . . .

There was only one way to find out. I called for space garb and a rocket-sled, and we went to look.

One would have thought that so gigantic an object would have had an appreciable gravitational field. It didn't, and when one thought it over, that was logical. It must not react or influence its surroundings in any way.

But in that case, what was the good of it?

Perfectly reflective, it hung awaiting our approach, and then, as if a switch had been pulled (maybe it had) it turned black. I thought for an extraordinary moment it had vanished; then I saw its bulk outlined against galaxies a trillion light-years distant, and gestalt put it back in the place from which it had seemed to disappear.

Cautiously, unsure of our next move, we circled it, and made out

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that there were features on its surface. There was an opening . . .

We closed on it, flashing torches into the yawning hole, and found that there was, now, a fair gravitational pull to contend with. It drew us gently down, and we found we could walk upright.

I reflected that this metal on which I stood had survived—perhaps—the Ultimate Origin, which we now suspected was not, after all, the beginning of things, and looked into the heart of the ship.

And we saw—though at first we didn't recognize it, for our minds were geared to anticipate something wholly alien and strange—a word written up. In our own language.

WELCOME.

Oh, now we have fought down our disbelief, and already we can think and reason with the knowledge which the discovery has brought. But it took us days to convince ourselves, even after we had dug our way through layer after layer of the ship's hull, finding renewed evidence at every turn . . .

All right, you want to know what exactly we found. We found pictorial records—film, exposed through gigantic telescopes at six points on the sphere, at a rate of about one frame every hundred thousand years. I've seen that film; it's fantastic, magnificent, unbelievable. The film fits our projectors. We found magnetic recordings and instrument readings for every conceivable waveband of energy from cosmic radiation to gravity. And we simply dropped the tapes into our players. The most interesting of all are the tapes which record the Ultimate Origin—there, you see, I can't even yet free myself of the old habit pattern of thinking that the universe has only happened once.

We now know, to be brief, that we have been here before. Perhaps more than once. Perhaps only once. It doesn't matter. Let me get to the most important point of all.

In the very heart of the ship we found another featureless sphere, about—oh, about nine hundred or a thousand meters diameter. Things connect with it. But we can't penetrate the exterior—no wonder, for it possesses the same properties which enabled the hull of the ship to withstand the pressures and temperatures of the—of the Origin and End. You see, towards the end of the cycle, the defenses of the ship go up automatically, and thereafter the only record is one of the energy required to resist what happens. Since the energy has been being stored continually since the ship was first built, there is plenty available. Stolen from the universe, you may say—and this has interesting consequences.

Why can't I keep my thoughts straight? I've missed out one very important thing. When we entered the ship the first time, underneath the message of welcome, we found a warning, which said, among other things, that the defenses of the ship would remain down for as long as it took a certain dial to complete one

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revolution. We couldn't interfere with the mechanism—we tried, of course, but failed—and we calculated that the time allowed was one year. That year is up today. So I ordered my crews to do the best they could; we ripped out all the old records, tapes, films and so forth, and replaced them for the benefit of the next visitors. We feel quite sure no one else in the entire remainder of this universal cycle will be able to look into this ship. After all—we built it.

We built it. Let me spell it out. In the very first cycle of the universe men were undecided as to whether there was a cycle, so they built this spaceship, using energy and matter stolen from the universe, which would never—except briefly, during this one year out of every universal cycle—influence the rest of the cosmos again. Only—I've been calculating, and I find that there was a first cycle which never would have been repeated. Mathematically, I could express it tidily, and have done so. In words—the energy and matter of the cosmos bounced off that first ship. And because it was perfectly reflective, the energy and matter repeated itself barring one small qualification. There was a very slight diminution in its total amount—locked forever and ever in the spaceship.

So it's our doing. There was a first time which was unique, but the repetitions will continue until some discrepancy builds up, until the minute difference due to the quantity of energy forever locked away from the rest of the universe causes someone (myself, presumably, or the echo of myself) to plant a hydrogen bomb inside the spaceship instead of refilling the recording devices. . . .

You see, there is a difference, cumulative, building up from universe to universe, partly due to the knowledge that our cosmos *is* cyclical. (Ah, how clumsy and fumbling words are compared to the simplicity of mathematics!) And there is that sphere-within-the-sphere which I mentioned above.

Just lately, over the past few weeks, it became to me a matter of desperate importance to know what was in there. I left my routine work to Incoratchuatar, and spent my time prowling about, inspecting, investigating, wondering, until I came to the conclusion that I already knew why that sphere was there; that it would open—briefly—and close again. Probably tonight, when the dial marking our allowance of time reaches the last segment of its progress.

I mentioned our reason for coming here at all, when we might have been satisfied to rely on the predictions of the Oyalet computers. We came because we wanted to verify with our own senses what our tools had told us. This spaceship, which had seen the universe grow old and grow young again, is also a tool, and human beings built it. There would have been an urge to verify its data, too.

This is what makes me believe—

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beyond any chance of scientific proof—that this cycle we are in is not the first, or the thousandth, but probably something of the order of the ten to the tenth. You see, the first Darak bez Hamath—the first "myself"—could not have been married. He could not have faced going into the dark unknown if he had left behind someone like you, my darling. Or two beautiful children like ours. This is where the effect of theft of energy from the universe strikes on the personal level.

But that amount of energy is so minute in comparison with the total that from the last universe to this one not even the language has changed. So I shall do what I have to do. I shall go into the ship when there remains only a few hours until the defenses go up again. No one else will be permitted to follow me. I shall leave this letter propped up against your portrait; I shall go and find the defenses of the inner sphere down. And inside that sphere—?

Why, myself.

So, after more billions of years than one can imagine, my predecessor will come out and take my place as I am taking his, and he will bring you this letter. You will find him a very little different from me; he will look at you across a gulf of inconceivable ages, but that is all. I hope, my darling, that the little difference will not be enough to cause you suffering.

And I myself? In a few hours from now (or so it will appear to me, at any rate) I shall come forth again, and know I am looking on a new universe, and I shall find just such a letter as this and take it to someone who will not be you precisely, but very much like you. And as she reads it, I shall think of you, but after that I shall try to forget that we are in a different cosmos. I shall try to forget myself, and become the man who will have released me.

So, I hope, will the man I go this moment to release become—

Your adoring
Darak bez Hamath.

YOGIS TRAINING SOVIET SPACEMEN?

P. S. MEHRA, a Bombay publisher, speaking in Montreal, Canada, in May, was quoted as saying that Indian Yogis have been reported teaching prospective Russian space travellers the art of breathing in different atmospheres. The Indian mystics, who, as is well known, practice breath-control as a means of attaining religious insight, were said to have been in Russia for about six months.

Some weeks earlier, Alexander Nesmeyanov, President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, had indicated that the Russians planned to land on and explore the moon before the end of 1965, and that it was possible that a "live" landing on one of the nearer planets would be attempted.

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the dancing that we did

by . . . Myrle Benedict

The lightest pressure of his fingers brought her face up to his as he bent over her—oh so slowly. . . .

"ALLEMANDE left, to yore left hand . . ."

Feet patted, eyes gleamed. Occasionally there was a cry of glee and high spirits from the smiling mouths, but mostly the sounds were of music and the soft thump of flying feet going through unbelievably complicated steps while the bodies to which the feet were attached moved leisurely through the set that the caller was reciting.

This was our recreation, our fun in life. In the hills, where city-ish sports were unknown, and even shooting was a way of putting meat on the table, the love of dancing grew into our lives and a man was judged on how well and how long he could dance. And this week, our Saturday-night dancing was even more gay, because I was finally home again.

"Gents to th' center, backs to th' bar. Ladies to th' center, form a li'l star . . ."

My breath came quickly, and I knew that I would be hard pressed to continue through the whole dance pattern without relinquishing my place in the four-couple set to one of the boys standing close to the dance floor, feet tapping, bodies

Here is another story about Myrle Benedict's Homo Felix, first met in her delightful SIT BY THE FIRE (F. U., *May 1958). She wrote recently from Oklahoma City, how she was rather busy, between a "husband, son, writing, and a fussily pregnant Siamese named Aly the Khat."*

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swaying impatiently. Letty Sue's eyes challenged me mockingly.

Can you do it? they said. Can you keep it up, after you went off and got your big, high education to come back to visit us? Drop out, if you dare. Go over where the old folks are gliding through the patterns with none of the fancy steps it takes a young and agile pair of feet to do.

". . . swing her where, I don't keer, take that purty gal out fer air!"

And then the noise welled up, the happy clamor of people unafraid of life and the joyous living of it. The sets dissolved into couples as the fiddle began a waltz.

"Do you want something to eat or drink?" I asked.

"I 'spect I could stand some punch," she replied, so we made our way over to the crowd at the table.

There was a huge bowl, half-empty now, containing a mixture of various juices and a combination of home-made wine and "white lightnin'" slipped surreptitiously into it while the ladies were looking the other way; and great platters of sandwiches and hot potato salad and pickles, with several cakes and a pie or two, almost all gone by now, farther on down the table. I filled two glasses, handed one to Letty Sue.

"Kinda tired out, ain't you?" she said.

I laughed and wiped my forehead. "A little. I guess I'm gettin' old."

"Sure, you are," she grinned. "I c'n see th' white hairs just poppin' out all over your head."

"You're gettin' on up there yourself," I retorted. "You're way past sixteen, aren't you? How come you're not married? You plannin' on bein' an old maid?"

"I was waitin' on you to come back," she retorted playfully, "but I 'spect I was wastin' my time."

The waltz had ended, and the fiddler struck up "Little Foot." Jimmy Daid touched Letty Sue's shoulder, and putting her pink, pointed tongue out at me, she allowed him to sweep her out onto the floor.

I went back to the table and filled a plate, content to watch Letty Sue. She wasn't actually the prettiest girl there, when it came to physical beauty; Jodene Bailey's lush, full-breasted figure and blonde pink-and-white loveliness overpowered Letty Sue's almost childish slimness. But Letty Sue had a sparkle to her, a fineness like a sleek race-horse that made Jodene and the rest of the girls seem a little too large and a little too over-breasted.

During the years I had been gone, Letty Sue had changed from the lady-like tomboy I had known since she moved here with her family at the age of 12, into an enchanting saucy minx. She had on a pale green dress, perfectly plain, with a light, floaty skirt, and the slippers on her incredibly slender feet matched the dress. Not for her were the ruffles, the dangling ribbons, the dangerously low-cut bodices. She wore no

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jewelry at all except the dangling jade earrings I'd sent her, and her coaldust hair was drawn back high and soft to fall in little curls against the nape of her neck.

Vaguely, I could feel the strangeness again, and to smother it, I went over to where Jodene was sitting, surrounded by tall, awkward young men. She immediately made a place for me beside her.

"Don't know why I should bother," she said, fluttering her eyes. "You haven't paid me one speck o' mind since you got home, Alan Wiley, an' I ought to be real put out with you."

"No fair," I said, unconsciously falling back into the hill-people speech that hadn't been altogether educated out of me. "Ain't even been here but a couple days, an' every time I try t' get near you, some over-grown lunk jest shoves me out o' the way!"

They laughed, all of them, good-naturedly. In a way, I suppose, they all felt a little sorry for me because I wasn't over six feet and broad as a barn door. There wasn't any need to, because I'm as strong as any of them, and at one time or another, while we were kids, I proved it to them, one by one. But I knew that they thought that was one reason why I went off to college, while the rest of them dropped out before they got through high school.

"I didn't neither shove you," said Jakie Adams jokingly. "I just beat you to th' front door."

"Well, before somebody else beats me to it," I said, "I want th' next dance with you."

"All right," she said sweetly, and to the chorus of protests, "Now, I cain't dance with but one at a time, an' Alan just come home."

She got up, fluffed her blue-flowered skirt, and, quite pleased at the commotion she had caused, allowed me to lead her onto the floor. The next dance was a schottische, a bit unfortunately, because Jodene was almost as tall as I, and she had to duck when whirling back under my arm. Letty Sue, on the other hand, could merely bend gracefully, and with Jimmy, she didn't have to bend at all. Jodene and I passed them and I winked maliciously. Any other girl would have been angry, but Letty Sue allowed a hint of a dimple to appear in her cheek, and her eyes spoke to me in a way that they had.

All right, they said. I showed you, and you showed me right back.

After the schottische ended, I left Jodene with her group of admirers and claimed Letty Sue. The caller, having amply refreshed himself from the punch bowl and the jug I knew was circulating somewhere, climbed back on the platform.

"Want to?" I asked.

"Oh, not partic'lar," she replied. "Let's go walkin'."

Letty Sue unobtrusively claimed her sweater, a pale green to match the rest of her outfit, and we slipped out the door. Hand in hand, we strolled down the packed-dirt road from the community house. The

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moon was beginning to wane from full, but we could see the old jalopies parked here and there, and occasionally a pair of shadowy figures. I touched the little box in my pocket, the one that contained the curious little gold filigree dangling from a tiny, slender chain.

"Race you to our place by th' crick," said Letty Sue, and in spite of the little heels on her shoes, it was all I could do to keep her slim figure in sight as it ducked through the trees, a pale green ghost against the dark green, almost jungle-lush growth around her.

When I got there, panting and half-slipping on the pine needles, she had already taken her shoes and stockings off and was dangling her feet in the water.

"That looks good," I said.

"Well, come on," she said. "Let's go wadin'."

"No, I don't think so," I said.

"Why not?" she asked, kicking the water a little.

"Don't do that. You'll get your dress splashed."

She made a beautiful picture, sitting there. When we were kids, we'd discovered this place in the crick where a huge tree had fallen half in the water. It made a perfect spot to sit and fish, or just talk the long, quiet afternoons away. Sometimes we'd just stare for hours into the water, watching it race over the smooth pebbles, touching it, patting it now and then as if to make sure it was really there. And now, here was a grown-up Letty Sue sitting there almost the same way, dappled in moonlight that tantalizingly half-revealed, half-concealed her from me.

For a while she sat quietly, the laughter and bubbling gaiety evaporated now that we were alone.

"Alan," she said, almost shyly, "Alan, how long you stayin'?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"I mean, you stayin' on, or will you be leavin'?"

"Don't know for sure. Now that Pa's dead, I suppose I ought to, but Bud's there to help out. Letty Sue, I don't want to be a farmer. I want to go somewhere else and do somethin' else."

"What?"

"I don't know," I said miserably. I didn't tell her that the out-of-place feeling I had always had was even worse, now that I had been out of the hill country a few years. I didn't tell her that that was one reason I came back—to try to ease that feeling. That reason—and Letty Sue herself.

"No," she said thoughtfully. "No, you ain't no farmer. Oh, I've seen you plow th' straightest furrows I ever saw, an' I've seen th' fields later with th' harvest hangin' heavy, but I c'd tell you didn't have your full mind turned to it."

The shadows hid her eyes, but I could feel her looking at me.

"You ain't like nobody else I ever knew, Alan. I watched you followin' me, when I beat you here. You move free, and all in one piece—not like th' rest o' th' boys 'round here,

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who walk like they was made out o' wood."

For some reason, her words, and the softness of her voice made a curious constriction in my throat, which spread through my chest. My eyelids prickled, and I could feel my pulse beating in my ears. I climbed out onto the tree, almost to the dip in the log where she was sitting with her feet dangling in the water. Although she was perfectly still, she seemed to flutter, to hesitate between staying and running away.

I reached out my hand to her, my palm touching her delicate jaw, my fingers gently brushing the hairline on the back of her neck. The lightest pressure of my fingers brought her face up to mine as I bent over her.

It was the first time I had ever kissed her. I had kissed many girls while I had been away; I had even slept with a few. I had kissed girls who were frightened, I had kissed girls who were bold, I had kissed girls who tried to devour me with their teeth and tongues. But no girl's kiss had ever meant anything, I discovered, compared to that butterfly-light brushing of mouths that made us both catch our breaths sharply.

"I—I think we'd better go back," Letty Sue said. "They'll start to wonder about us."

"All right," I said. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to pick her up and carry her a few yards to where the ferns grew and make a soft bed for the both of us and kiss her again and again— Instead, I took the little box out of my pocket.

"Before we go back," I said, "I want to give you somethin'."

"What is it, Alan?"

"Oh, nothin' much. It's just a li'l ol' necklace. I—I've had it a long time. I think it was my Ma's. My real Ma's, that is."

"Your real Ma? What do you mean?"

"I thought you knew. Ma isn't my real Ma, and Pa wasn't my real Pa. They got killed when I was about 10, and Ma and Pa Wiley raised me."

"No, I didn't know."

"Oh, it doesn't matter much, anymore."

I put the box in her hand.

"Oh, Alan, I couldn't take it— not if it was your Ma's."

"That's why I want you to have it. I want—you, Letty Sue."

Her head jerked up sharply. "Don't say that, Alan."

"Well, we won't talk about it right now," I said. "Tell you what; I'll meet you here tomorrow afternoon. All right?"

She hesitated. "All right," she said finally.

I helped her wade ashore.

"Better let me dry your feet before you put your shoes and stockings back on," I said, getting out my handkerchief.

"No. Let me," she said. She turned her back and dried her feet quickly, almost as if she were ashamed of them and wanted to cover them as soon as possible.

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We didn't hold hands on the way back to the community house, although we walked close together. Letty Sue didn't say anything, and I didn't either. Although she had acted afraid, I felt sure she was pleased inside and flattered, too, that she'd gotten what amounted to a proposal.

When we went back inside to the light, her lightly tanned olive skin glowed warm with the blood under it, and her lips were slightly more coral than usual. There was a reckless glint in her eye, as she turned to me, impatient to dance. And the dancing that we did that night was like there was nobody else there, so much that other people noticed it, and talked about it.

Finally, it broke up, reluctantly, and everybody went home to the little cabins scattered over the hills around the community house. To Ma's and Bud's surprise, I didn't walk Letty Sue home; I vaguely remember Bud joshing me about it, but I knew it would spoil it if I did. I wanted to just listen to the poetry-sounding words in my ears, and I felt Letty Sue wanted to, too, and we needed to be alone to do it. Together, we could have only heard each other.

When we got home, and Bud and I had climbed the stairs to the room we had shared ever since I had come to live with them, and I had pulled the curtain dividing the room, I waited until I could hear Bud's snores before I pulled the outer corners of my eyes and let the contact lenses drop into my palm, one by one.

Did I have any right, I wondered? Knowing that I was, in some way, different, did I have any right to want Letty Sue? With my eyes the way they were, and my feet . . . I pulled off my shoes and flexed my toes, four on each foot.

I could remember only little spots and pieces about my real parents, which seemed strange, because 10 years old is old enough to remember, if you want to. But just about all I could recall was being given my lenses, and a bottle of some kind of stain for my skin until I could get used to the sunlight enough to get a tan, and being told to "be careful."

But careful of what? Was it the strangeness that sometimes crept over me, when I would think odd thoughts and feel odd emotions that were somehow like, yet completely unlike those that other people had? It wasn't as though I were two people, exactly; it was rather like I was superimposed over myself, with the other person showing through now and then, in spite of the self-discipline I had enforced upon myself.

I juggled the lenses in my hand. They were exquisite, painted the exact color of my own eyes, except that the pupil-space was round. I couldn't see quite as well as I could without them, but nobody else I had ever seen had pupils like a cat's. Maybe that was why my parents had warned me to "be careful"—to never let anybody see me without

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the lenses. Only that didn't seem quite right, not quite all of it.

I don't think I slept very much that night.

And the next day was like a dream, too, until finally, the noon meal was over and I could go back to the crick to our place, Letty Sue's and mine.

I was impatient, and Letty Sue was not; so I sat and waited for her the better part of an hour until I finally heard her coming through the woods, making no more sound than a cat walking through dry grass when he didn't much care who heard him.

And she came and sat by me, and the sunlight dappled her, like the moonlight had dappled her the night before. She had on another green dress, darker than her dancing frock, and it occurred to me that no matter what shade of green she put on, her eyes would match it.

"Hello, Alan," she said softly.

"Hello, Letty Sue," I replied. Of a sudden, we didn't have anything to say to each other. We only sat there, bound together by our eyes.

She looked away first.

"I—I had a real nice time at th' community house last night," she said, and I saw her hands moving nervously in her lap.

"So did I," I said.

Her hands jerked, the fingers twining themselves about each other. She began burnishing her little fingernail with the ball of her thumb, scarcely aware of what she was doing.

"I got that li'l box with me."

I said nothing.

"I didn't open it yet."

Still I said nothing.

"I thought maybe I better give it back t' you."

"Why, Letty Sue? Don't you like me?"

"No," she said slowly, her eyes on her twisting hands. "I don't—like you."

I reached over and took her hands, prying them apart from each other, straightening out the fingers. Her nails, strangely enough, were pointy and almond-shaped, like mine—narrower at the tip than at the base, even though I kept them trimmed close.

"Letty Sue," I said, "I don't think you understand what I've been tryin' to say to you."

"I understand, all right," she said miserably. "I didn't sleep last night, for thinkin' of it. You're wanting me t' marry you, and—I cain't."

"You love me, don't you?"

"I've loved you ever since I first saw you," she said, so low I could scarcely hear her, "when I was just a little girl an' you was one of th' big boys."

"Well, maybe you think I'm askin' you in jest. I'm not, Letty Sue. I had to think long and hard on it, myself."

She freed one of her hands and touched my hair. "Soft, and blacky," she said, "just like mine. And our skins—Alan, had you ever thought on how we look so alike?"

"No more than the Jameson's and

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the Wheeler's. All of them have red hair and freckles."

"Alan," she said, "I never told you, but my Ma and Pa ain't my real Ma and Pa, neither."

"They aren't?"

"Huh-uh. They took me in when I was about 8 years old. They never had no kids of their own. And I was thinkin', last night, after you told me what you did, and after you said what you did—wouldn't it be awful, if we was brother and sister?"

"Yes, it would, Letty Sue, seein' the way we feel about each other, but you don't need to worry. I remember enough to know I never had a sister."

Her face cleared and she started to smile, but almost immediately grew troubled again.

"Now, what's wrong, Letty Sue? Now what's worrying you?"

"I—I cain't tell you."

"You're my intended bride, and I don't want any secrets between us."

"I cain't tell you, I said! And I ain't your intended bride!"

I didn't say anything. I just reached in the pocket of her dress and got the little box I had given her the night before. I opened it and took out the necklace, the little gold filigree dancing and flashing in the light. When Letty Sue saw it, her eyes got big and round.

"Why, that's a—"

"A what?"

She shook her head.

"What is it, Letty Sue? You recognized it! You've seen it before!"

"No, I haven't, I haven't!"

"But you knew what it was! Tell me, Letty Sue, please!" In my intensity, I was almost shaking her.

"Oh, Alan, it's a *whel!*"

The word meant nothing to me, but it sank, echoing, through the layers of my mind.

"It's a *whel,*" she repeated. "At least it—looks like a *whel.*"

Curiously, I re-examined the gracefully-designed gold filigree. It was incredibly intricate, whorled and spun in on itself into a diameter of not more than perhaps a quarter of an inch.

"A *whel.*" I tasted the word, feeling it not quite as strange as I thought. "What does it mean?"

"It means," she said, blushing, her cheeks turning coral, "what you wanted to use it for. It's what a man gives a girl sometimes, if he's sweet on her."

She picked it up on her index finger as it dangled on the chain, then let it swing free again.

"I think there's somethin' I better tell you," she said. "I never told it to another livin' soul—but I think I c'n tell it to you."

She bent her head, cupped her hand in front of her face, and to my astonishment, pulled at the corners of her eyes and let a pair of contact lenses pop out into her palm. She looked up at me, the green eyes even greener than before—and the pupils contracted in the sunlight to narrow, vertical slits.

"Letty Sue!" I said, so astonished my jaw hung open.

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She flung herself away from me, and began to cry.

"I knew it," she sobbed, "I knew it! The minute you found out, you didn't want me no more!"

One arm around her, I reached for her shoe. Her foot jerked away, but then was passive and I removed the slim slipper. Like mine, her foot had four toes.

"She tol' me to watch out," Letty Sue sobbed. "She tol' me to take care, an' I always did, up 'til now. I wisht I hadn't told!" she cried passionately. "I wisht I'd kept it from you! I could have, too!"

"Letty Sue," I said gently, wonderingly. "Letty Sue—"

But she wouldn't even listen to me.

There was only one thing to do, so I did it. Holding onto Letty Sue with one hand, I managed to pop out my lenses with the other, even though one fell on the ground.

"Look at me," I said.

Finally, she looked up. "Why, why—" she said, "you're like me!" And then, breathlessly, "Who are we?"

But I didn't answer. I was too busy holding her close against me. The habit of long years made her press away for a moment, but then she melted—and she, too, was holding me tightly, as if she had found something she had been looking for, and although she knew it wasn't going to try to get away, she had to hold it fast, nonetheless.

I was still clutching the *whel*. Gently, I loosened her grip so that I could fasten the slim chain around her neck. My hands shook so that I fumbled the clasp, but she made no move to help me. Finally, I got it, and the *whel* lay lightly on her breastbone, winking at me all the while I was picking her up and carrying her to the place where the fern grew so thick it made a soft bed with yet enough so that we were covered, too, with the lacy pale green light filtering through. And when I took off her dress, it made her look almost like a sea-creature, falling on the silvery skin that the sun hadn't touched.

I awoke with the light through the fern fronds making shadows on my eyelids. She lay close against me with my arm still around her, her lips on my throat. While I looked at her, her eyes opened and she smiled at me. I put my hand against the back of her neck, lifting the loosened mass of her gray-black hair, feeling the soft, cool, silken warmth of it against my flesh.

"Letty Sue," I said quietly, wonderingly.

"Don't call me Letty Sue, Alan," she said. "I ain't Letty Sue any longer. I'm—I'm somebody diff'r-ent."

"What shall I call you, then?"

"Well, my full name's Letitia."

"That's too solemn for you. I'll call you Tish."

"Tish," she smiled. "I like that."

Reluctantly, she got up, went down to the crick. I could hear her splashing, and when I raised myself

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up on one elbow, I could see the silver gleaming curve of her spine as she knelt and scooped the water over herself. Unafraid, unashamed, she knelt there, completely nude except for the *whel* that flashed in the pool of light around her. Her spare, firm buttocks and the back of her neck, revealed as her hair slid forward over one shoulder, looked so charmingly indefensible I felt a catch in my throat.

But then she stood up, turned around, arching her back as she lifted her hair, unconsciously displaying the tiny, proud breasts with the nipples still tautly puckered; and I knew that in all the world there was not a lovelier sight than this silver-bodied girl with the golden coral nipples and mouth, standing so freely and so langorously in the middle of a quiet, green forest.

Before she returned to me, she searched until she had found all four lenses, scattered where we had dropped them. She washed them carefully in the crick, and put them in the little box the *whel* had been in.

Then she came back and nestled into my arms again.

"What are we going to do?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Go away somewheres, I expect. Go to a city, maybe, and I'll get a job."

"You'll be 'shamed of me."

"Why?"

"You're educated, and I'm not. I don't talk fancy, like you do."

"You're silly. You talk like you were raised up to talk, and so do I when I don't think about it. There's nothin' wrong with th' way you talk."

Reassured, she nestled closer.

"Know what?"

"No. What?"

"I don't feel all alone no more."

"You won't ever be any more."

"I know. But when I was a little girl, I used to feel so lonely. So—so diff'rent. And I would try and try to be just like ever'body else and forget that I wasn't, but I couldn't ever quite. You know what I mean?"

I nodded. "I know."

"Let's leave now," she said impulsively. "Nobody'll be surprised, not after last night, watching us dance."

I smiled at her. "Let's let them see us dance once more," I said. "It would make them happy to see us marry their way, too."

"All right, Alan," she said. "But let it be soon!"

I laughed, from the sheer joy of it, and squeezed her. And then a thought occurred to me. "Tish, how did you know that it was a *whel* when you saw it?"

Her brow puckered as she tried to remember. "I—I don't know. I think my Ma had one like it before —before— Oh, Alan, I've forgotten so much!"

"I have, too," I replied, "trying to make myself just like everybody else."

"Do you suppose we're all there are?"

"I don't think so. I don't know why, but I don't think so."

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I closed my eyes and lay there, letting memories feel their way to the surface and bob there, just under the layer of superimposed self, where I could almost, but not quite, reach them. And then Letty Sue—Tish—kissed me, and I remembered that I could reach her quite easily.

Presently, we arose, washed, dressed, started back for her folks' cabin. Our lenses were in, our clothes only slightly rumpled, and we walked very close together, hand in hand. From the way we looked, nobody would have known what had happened to us—if they didn't chance to see us.

We felt that several saw, and we didn't care.

"In a week," she said. "Preacher comes next Sunday."

I knew what she meant. "Yes, a week. Then we'll go away. We'll try to find some more of us. There's so much we've lost, we have to try to find it again."

She looked at me, and laughed, a bubbling free laugh. We had reached the old dirt road, and she took my other hand and began to sing a dancing tune.

And so we danced lightly, foolishly, like children, all the way up the hill, and the *whel* around her throat danced, too, sparkling and gleaming in the late afternoon sunlight. And right at that moment, it didn't matter at all if we ever found any more of our own people.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND THE SPACE AGE

"ONE MAY SMILE at space fiction, but I think it is closer to reality than some of us may suppose."

The speaker was Earl Jellicoe, the son of the famous Naval Commander during the First World War, who went on to call space research one of the human race's most revolutionary advances in a recent debate in the House of Lords. "For five hundred years we have played a large part in extending the frontiers of human knowledge," he pointed out. "I do not see why on this occasion we should opt out. We as a nation live on our industrial wits. We cannot make our way in the world without advanced technology, but our technology will NOT remain advanced if we deliberately exclude ourselves from this area of research." The surprising thing about even the purest scientific research, he continued (no doubt with a slight smile) was that it *had* "a funny way of paying off in its industrial application."

Lord Shackleton, from the Opposition Benches, proposing action—suggesting a Commonwealth enterprise, similar to Euratom, agreed wholeheartedly. (The London *Daily Telegraph*, at this point, headed the paragraphs—FACING UP TO PROJECT. NO SCIENCE FICTION.) "There is a feeling," he said, "that this is a subject which should be left to America and Russia, and that as far as we are concerned, it is still science fiction. That is really not so. We know that the Government is going to be advised on it, but I hope they will not continue the equivocal attitude of so many people, that it is something too unlikely for serious men to bother with. This is something that is here now; other nations are going to do it."

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the alternate host

by . . . Evelyn E. Smith

This was no place for these aliens. It was no place for anyone not resigned to life such as they all knew it. . . .

I WATCHED their vessel land across the valley, jetting fire as it gouged out a resting place for itself in the turf. Whoever they were, they must have come from the stars, for we were all the intelligent life that remained on this planet—and we were not travellers.

After a little time had passed, a section of the vessel swung out and two of the newcomers emerged. They were bipedal and appeared to be mammals. I could sense that there were more—perhaps a dozen—inside; however, although I had the greatest perceptive range of my clan, the newcomers were still too far away for me to do more than catch the edge of their thoughts.

The two who had come outside wore bulky coverings, probably as protection against a hostile atmosphere. And I hoped that the atmosphere *would* prove hostile, so that they'd go back in their vessel to wherever they'd come from. It wasn't that I objected to mammals; on the contrary, the rest of my race and I had enjoyed the most amicable relationship with the Dmroi until they died out . . . But this was no place for mammals. It was no place for us either, as a matter of

Evelyn E. Smith has that rare ability—surprisingly rare, actually, in SF—to set herself into the minds of the aliens, or the alien life-forms, about whom she writes. The result is intelligent and challenging SF, instead of badly disguised Westerns! A collection of her stories is long overdue!

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fact, but those of us who were left were old and more or less resigned to their eventual fate.

When the suns began to go down, the two mammals returned to their ship. Soon it grew dark and rather chilly. I sensed that those inside the vessel were preparing for rest, and I retired to my rest, hoping that when I awakened to sensation in the morning the ship would be gone.

But it was still there, clean and shining in the golden-yellow light of the two suns. And I thought with regret that, if the strangers' vessel could appear beautiful to me, no doubt our planet could appear beautiful to them. How were they to know that its beauty was purely extrinsic?

Part of the ship swung out again and the strangers emerged—six or seven of them this time, their heads unprotected by the transparent cases the two first ones had worn, their bodies shielded by only the flimsiest of coverings — coverings which would certainly be of no avail against the Belanei.

"Why are you so worried about those creatures, Mors?" one of my brothers asked. "What are they to you, anyhow? And don't you see how much like the Belanei they are themselves? I wouldn't be surprised if they turned out to be a variety of the same species."

"They are *not* the same as the Belanei, Nin," I replied, firmly, because I'd noticed that same peculiar resemblance myself. Even the Dmroi had not looked as much like the Belanei as these creatures. But one must never make judgments solely on the basis of appearance. "Would the Belanei be capable of building a vessel like that to fly from star to star?"

He stopped projecting, finally emitted reluctant agreement.

"Besides," I went on, "I've sensed some of their thoughts. They couldn't possibly be Belanei."

"They aren't of our kind anyway," projected another of us. "Since we must die, why shouldn't they die too?"

The others murmured assent. They were old and they were selfish. It was only when you grew to be very old, as I had grown, that you came to realize that all living creatures are part of the same thing, and so, in saving the life of another, you are saving yourself. But that isn't something you can tell anyone; it is a thing he must learn for himself.

Two of the strangers approached the place where we were. They came so close that I was able to observe that they communicated by sounds, and I found I was able to pick up the thoughts on which these sounds were based fairly well. If I strained myself, I could also catch the hidden thoughts that lay beyond.

"This looks like an ideal place for a colony," one said. "The atmosphere is almost exactly like Earth's. Even the foliage is the

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same color, which, let me tell you, is a big psychological advantage. Why, except for the extra sun, it could almost *be* Earth. And there doesn't seem to be any intelligent life—any life at all, for that matter, except plants. Seems like a swell set-up."

"Set-up is right," the other replied prudently. "It looks too good. We've only seen a little bit of this planet, Joe. How do we know what might be lurking around?"

"Lurking where?" Joe demanded. "All the vegetation is low, except for those big trees, and precious few of them. There's hardly any place life could be hiding—unless it were re-al-ly small. No, I still say this planet would make a fine colony for us."

"It wouldn't make a fine colony for you at all!" I projected fervently. "You have no idea of what will happen to you here if you stay. Take my advice and leave while you can."

"Funny," the second one said, "I seem to feel as if we were being . . . warned."

"Warned of what?" Joe asked. "Impending doom? Something like that?"

"Well . . . yes. Warned away, anyhow. Do you think . . . ?"

Joe laughed and clapped a promontory upon the upper part of the other's trunk. "You and your premonitions, Bill," he said. "You were sure that motor wasn't going to hold out until we made planetfall, weren't you?"

"It didn't do any harm to check, did it?"

"And you were sure Callahan was going to die when he got the Venusian swamp fever?"

"Few people recover. He was damn lucky."

"And you were absolutely certain the atmosphere on this planet was going to be toxic?"

"Well, it is . . . in a way. Not literally . . . I mean—I know we can breathe it all right. But there *is* something wrong here; I feel it and I don't like it."

Joe laughed and gave the other a friendly blow again.

"You don't just feel it!" I projected frantically. "I'm telling you there *is* something wrong! There *is* danger."

But only Bill seemed to be disturbed by my emanations. And even he couldn't realize that it was an intelligent entity who was producing them, that they did not come from some force inside his own mind. There was no way I could convince him. I couldn't try to speak their language because I had no vocal apparatus.

Then one of the Belanei emerged.

"Don't move," Joe said very softly. "Look what just came out of that tree."

"By God," Bill replied in the same low tones," it looks like a—a dryad, as a matter of fact. I didn't know they still had 'em anywhere."

"She could almost be human," Joe whispered. "A little small, but

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not too small. If it weren't for that green color and that—dandeliony hair, she'd be a girl. And a beautiful girl at that."

"I wouldn't even say green actually," Bill sighed. "More like pale chartreuse. It's not really as repellent as it might be. In fact, it's not repellent at all . . . You know, Joe, we've been in space over three whole years?"

"She—she's smiling at us," Joe said. "She's friendly! Imagine that!"

"She's coming toward us," Bill added, his eyes fastened upon the graceful form of the Belan as it swayed delicately toward them. I knew that his mind was lost to me; he would pay no more heed to my projections. The Belan grasped one of his upper limbs. It had to reach up to do so, for the top of its downy head reached only to the joint. When it completed its cycles, it would be larger.

"She likes me!" Bill gasped incredulously.

"Some taste!" Joe said defensively facetious. But then another of the Belan came and quietly attached itself to him, and he was no longer defensive. "What a planet," he said softly. "God, what a planet! . . . There must be more of these—people, Bill. So let's take the girls back to the ship—if they'll come—and see if we can learn the lingo from them. It'll help in getting to know the natives."

The "girls" went all right. From now on they would go wherever the men went.

My brothers laughed. "See how much good you did, Mors!" they mocked me. "Now give up trying to save those worthless creatures and enjoy what life is remaining to you—to us. Perhaps, with these *men* here to divert the Belanei, we may be able to prolong our existences a little longer."

"Perhaps," I said, "but the price is a great one, even though we won't be the ones to pay it—directly anyhow."

The suns hadn't risen much higher in the sky when Joe and Bill returned, of course with their Belanei, and accompanied by two other men. One of the newcomers seemed to be a personage of some authority. He was in a state of displeasure. "A fine start we've made," he told the first two angrily, "kidnapping their women the first thing."

"But we didn't kidnap them, Captain," Bill protested. "They came willingly—didn't you, girls?" The Belanei continued to clutch the men's arms and smile their empty smiles. "They don't understand," he said weakly.

"Sure they don't," the captain sneered. "Otherwise they wouldn't have gone off with you like that. How do you think the men of the tribe will like your running away with their women?"

"Maybe these are single girls," Joe suggested feebly.

"None of that!" the captain

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snorted. "In any case, it was a damn stupid thing to do." He frowned. "I don't know why, but somehow I have a feeling that something pretty awful is going to happen to us here because—because of those girls."

I redoubled my efforts on him, but he misunderstood. These creatures just didn't seem to receive anything except emotion, and not even that very well. "Let's try to put them back exactly where you found them," he said. "After all, the men should know you weren't gone long enough to have—well, harmed the girls. You say you found 'em under these trees?"

"*In* the trees." Joe said. "Each of them came out of a different tree. Out of those orangey swellings, actually. Like those mythological what-do-you-call-ums."

"Dryads," Bill said. "Of course not really dryads. Those are awfully big trees. Maybe they're hollow inside. Lots of people live in hollow trees."

"Sure, sure; they live in trees. But it'll be enough if we put these women *near* the trees. Okay, let 'em go."

There was a silence.

"We're not holding them," Bill said finally. "They're holding us. They *like* us. Maybe there's a shortage of men in the tribe."

"Poor things," the captain said "They don't know any better, I guess. Here girl, let go this man's arm." He reached out for Bill's Belan. Then he recoiled. "By God, the little bitch bit me!"

"I told you." Bill stroked the creature's limp hand. "They *wanted* to come with us."

The captain scratched his top. "But, even so, they *can't* stay with you. I mean to say . . . McClure, what do you make of this?"

The fourth man didn't answer for a moment. "I can't pretend to understand it," he finally said. "I'm not sure I even want to. All I know is that it spells trouble. Listen—" he wet his lips "—I have what will sound like a purely irrational suggestion to make. Get those girls away from Bill and Joe—kill them if necessary—and let's leave this planet right away."

"Kill them?" The captain stared. "You're crazier than Bill and Joe. Where did you get an idea like that?"

"I tell you—I don't know!" he cried. "It just came to me and somehow I'm convinced that it's what we should do. Naturally I can't do any more than make a suggestion."

"And thank God for that . . . You know," the captain went on earnestly, "I think I've figured out what's really wrong with this planet. It makes people go nuts." He clutched the other man's arm. "Hey, now *I'm* beginning to see things."

"No, you're not," McClure sighed. "That is—I saw it too. One of those swellings on the trees just burst and another one of those—

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dryad things came out. She's coming toward you."

"Look here, girlie," said the captain, "you better go home or back into your tree or something . . . Omigosh, you've got one too, McClure. What are we going to do!"

"I told you I haven't the faintest idea," McClure replied. "No, that's not entirely true—I still have the feeling that killing them's the only way we'd be able to free ourselves, and I can't explain why." He looked down sadly at the Belan hanging onto his arm. "And I know I myself wouldn't actually be able to kill them any more than you would."

"Hey, what's going on here?" cried a loud voice. A fifth man came upon the scene, followed by the rest of the ship's company straggling along behind him. "More girls, huh? We were watchin' you from across the valley. How come you didn't let us in on the party?"

"You will be soon enough, Callahan," McClure said. "There'll be— girls enough for everyone. Wait and see."

"How come you know?" Callahan asked suspiciously. "Or is it just that you know everything?"

"McClure seems to have gotten into rapport with nature here," the captain sneered, without complete assurance. "He thinks something awful's going to happen to us."

"I don't think havin' a girl friend for each of us is so terrible," another of the newcomers said. "If the girls are willin' and it's true— For Pete's sake, look at that!"

"The trees are openin' up!" Callahan exclaimed. "Girls are comin' out."

"McClure," said the other crewman, "you're psychic, and I honor you for it."

I knew it was too late now to do anything, but I kept on trying, probing desperately in all their minds, searching for a certain concept which their species might not even have—which might be entirely alien and hence incomprehensible to them. But I did find it at last, deep in the brain of one who performed the function of hydroponist. I pulled it out and projected it to McClure, who seemed to be the only one with whom I could establish any communication.

"Listen, fellows," he said slowly, "have you ever heard of blister-rusts? They're plant parasites. If you've done any gardening you might've run into them."

"Plant parasites he talks about," retorted a crewman, staring down into the flat green eyes of his Belan, "when he's got a girl like this, too." It gave him a vacant smile.

"They're heteroecious," McClure went on thoughtfully. "That is . . . they have two life stages; and they can't complete their full cycle unless they can prey on . . . two distinct species."

"That's right," agreed the hydroponist, "but they'd have to be two species of the same kind of life. Take the cedar-apple rust—cedars

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and apples are both trees." He looked at the Belan on his arm.

"What *are* you two talking about?" the captain demanded.

"Well," the hydroponist explained, "the cedar-apple rust begins on the cedar tree. In spring the spores switch over to the apple, and later they get back to the cedar again. So, if you want to grow cedars you can't have apples anywhere around for a while, and vice versa. Otherwise they both get infected—and eventually die. It's the same with white pine and gooseberries. They need alternate hosts." His voice faltered a little. "But why bring it up at all, McClure?"

"You know why," McClure said, trying to draw away from the thing on his arm. "I think maybe these—creatures are parasites like that."

The men hooted with laughter. "Are we cedars or are we apples then?" "Gooseberries," Callahan quipped. Everybody laughed.

"On this planet there could be a kind of parasite that preys on both vegetables *and* animals," McClure persisted. "After all, this isn't Earth."

"Have you seen any animals here, Mr. McClure?" the captain wanted to know.

"No, but that doesn't mean there aren't any—or that there haven't ever been any here. Perhaps these creatures haven't completed their life cycle. Don't ask me how I know this, but, even though they look like people, they're really a—a—"

"Fungus," murmured the hydroponist. "But that's absurd . . . of course . . ." However, he pulled away from his Belan, a little.

"Honestly, McClure," Bill said earnestly, "can't you see for yourself what a— an *insane* idea that is?"

McClure rubbed his eyes with his hand. "Of course I can, but I can't shake it out of my head. They came right out of the trees, didn't they? A dryad isn't more credible than a parasite. And, if they're fungi, it's all right to kill them."

"It would be the only thing to do . . ." the hydroponist murmured. Unobtrusively he tried to detach the delicate fingers of the Belan from his arm, but the creature held fast.

"Look here, McClure," the captain said, "I'll have no more talk of killing innocent females. I'll take the charitable view and figure it's the two suns got you a little mixed up. And, if you don't like your girl, you don't have to take her back with you to the ship."

McClure smiled and shook his head. "It wouldn't be as easy as that."

"No," said the hydroponist thinly, "it wouldn't be easy at all. You have to cut out a canker."

"Of course, I figure we really ought to take them all back, seeing that they don't have any menfolk to protect them." The captain stopped and frowned. "I guess those suns got me, too. Why would taking those . . . girls back with us be tantamount to suicide?" He laughed. "I'm going nuts, too."

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The men laughed, a trifle nervously. "Let's go back to the ship," Bill suggested. "It's cooler there. This place is just a little—well spooky. I think it's those trees—they almost look like the ones in the old fairy-tale illlustrations. With faces, you know."

"Yes," said McClure, "we know. I think maybe they do, too."

"We'd better be getting back at that," the captain said. "It's going to be dark soon, anyhow."

"Did you notice," the hydroponist asked, "that there are scars on the tree trunks at the spots where they came out?" He and McClure looked at each other pallidly. But there was nothing they could do.

"Doors, that's all," Callahan said. "People who live in trees gotta have doors. C'mon, let's go."

They left, a not quite gay little procession, trooping back across the grass to the ship, the men's arms entwined with the little green "girls'." There would be brief ecstasy and after that they would become as dry and withered as we were. . . . but they wouldn't last as long because they were a younger, weaker race. However, our tortured bodies would be freed for a time of the perpetual squeezing, sucking, clawing at our vitals. Perhaps we would even have the chance to die in peace—physically, that is.

"You see, Mors, it was no use," Nin told me, but gently. "They heard you; they just wouldn't listen. . . . You did your best."

"I suppose so," I sighed. "Remember how hard it was for us to accept the Dmroi as intelligent creatures when we first encountered them, because they were so different from us? It's the same thing again. These men mistake the mindless Belanei for intelligent creatures because they look like themselves. They refuse to understand because they couldn't imagine an intelligent tree outside of a fairy tale."

NOW A FLYING LIGHT BULB?

WE HAVE NO DESIRE to cause confusion among the brethren—but, just as we were going to press, it *was* reported here in the East that an unidentified flying object, shaped "like a light bulb, only bigger" had been reported over Fort Smith, Arkansas, and three neighboring Oklahoma cities. A radio operator at the Sebastian County Sheriff's office is said to have seen the object from the Court House after a housewife in a neighboring town phoned in about it. There were later reports of sightings at Muldrow, Moffett, and Salisaw, across the State line, in Oklahoma. Apparently. the object would fade away and then appear again as (*no details about the speed!*) it moved through the air. (This was *not*, we assume, the saucer-formed aircraft, invented by an Englishman and being constructed here in this country, reported recently in the English press, that can take off vertically and then move forward at immense speed.)

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robot son

by . . . Robert F. Young

LATHEHAND approached the tek temple warily. It stood on a russet hillside, a row of golden maples curtaining its brusque facade. Above it the sky showed brisk and blue and clear.

He shivered. The morning was relatively mild, but the memory of the chill night and the frosty dawn was still with him, and even the warmly rising sun could not drive the memory away.

He moved forward slowly, keeping behind a stand of garnet-leaved sumacs. The frost on the grass had transmuted to dew, and the dew seeped through his thin sandals and numbed his feet. He felt the fear deep inside him, marveled that a tek temple should have inspired it. He should have felt reverent, not afraid. Tek temples symbolized good, not evil—

Or had, until the Tekgod had murdered summer: set the leaves of the trees on fire and drenched the world in daytime rain, coated the dawn grass with transient silver, filmed familiar ponds and puddles with brittle ice, transformed balmy zephyrs into bitter winds that raised tiny lumps on your skin and made

These were shocking things she said — shocking in their strangeness — contradicting everything he'd ever learned.

Robert F. Young (who has just sold to the Post*) raises a disturbing possibility here (raised before and which will be raised again) about the future of science. Whether this will prove to be so, we cannot know at this time. The point may be made (and has been made by a friend) that, while this is well written, this is not SF. To say so, though, is to limit the scope of SF.*

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you see your breath. And certainly, if the Tekgod was capable of turning against his children overnight, his teks and tekresses were also capable, and their temples could no longer be considered as sanctuaries.

But, as representatives of the Tek Kingdom, they had the information Lathehand wanted—the why and wherefore of the Tekgod's action, and the location of the Temple of Heaven. Moreover, their temples were well-stocked with food, and Lathehand hadn't eaten for days.

The stand of sumacs patterned the course of a small brook that wound down the hillside. Halfway down the slope, the brook made a wide curve that brought it quite close to the east corner of the temple. When he came opposite the corner, Lathehand dropped to his hands and knees and began working his way through the slender, elf-like trees. He kept his eyes on the ground, carefully avoided twigs and fallen leaves. The sound, as well as the sight of him, could provoke the attendant tek into ill-considered action, and Lathehand had no intention of dying just yet. He had faced death too many times these past few weeks, and he had developed a passion for staying alive.

The sumacs closest to the brook were more riotous than the outlying ones. They formed a garnet curtain through which it was impossible to see. Lathehand parted the curtain carefully—and found himself looking straight into the cold gray eyes of a gold-robed tekress.

She was sitting calmly on the opposite bank, her legs folded beneath her robe. Sunlight limned her fair, full face, glittered on the U-235 symbol that adorned her skin-tight cowl. A paralyzer pistol lay on her lap, its muzzle pointing, almost casually, directly at his forehead.

For a long time Lathehand did not move. The tekress regarded him steadily, her slender fingers stroking the pistol as though it were a lovable pet instead of a deadly instrument capable of turning the human body into a malfunctioning hulk of unfeeling flesh. Presently: "You wished to see me?" she asked.

He nodded. Numbly. "Yes, Your Virginity," he said.

"You chose a rather circuitous way of going about it."

"I was afraid, Your Virginity."

"Why should you be afraid of a tekress?"

The pistol still pointed at his forehead, but her fingers had ceased their stroking motion, lay quietly on her lap. Some of Lathehand's courage returned and he edged his body partway through the curtain of leaves. "Why should a tekress be afraid of me?"

Color touched her cheeks, lending them an evanescent softness; but it had no effect on her austere, watchful eyes. "In times of crisis, certain men react in certain ways," she said. "They plunder, they pillage . . . they rape."

For a moment Lathehand was speechless. Then: "You — you thought—"

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"I watched you for almost an hour. You advanced—unorthodoxly—for a man bent on a religio-technological errand. Should I have thought differently?"

"But Your Virginity! A *tekress!* I did not, would not, dream!"

She looked at him intently. He had never seen eyes quite as gray and as deep as hers were. Presently she stood up, slipped the pistol into her robe. "No, I guess you wouldn't," she said. There was an odd note in her voice. "But you didn't answer my question," she resumed. "Why should you be afraid of a tekress?"

He got to his feet and waded through the brook. She watched him carefully. Lathehand was not a large man, but his shoulders were wide, his limbs muscular. His hair was dark and disheveled, his young face hard and thin. He climbed up on the bank and halted several feet from her. "Because I'm afraid of the Tekgod," he said.

"I see."

"Why did he destroy summer?"

"I do not know."

He swayed slightly, giddy from hunger and the new knowledge that tekresses, as well as ordinary humans, could be something less than omniscient. "But you *must* know!"

She shook her head. "But I don't." Then: "You look hungry. Are you?"

"Yes, Your Virginity."

"Come with me."

Inside the temple, she led the way through the huge sub-ganglion chapel to the living quarters in the rear. Lathehand stared at the towering banks of gleaming controls rising straight up to the lofty dome through which the morning sunlight filtered in nacreous splendor. The chapel was typical rather than unique: there were thousands of others just like it, situated at key points all over the world, each linked to the master ganglion in the Temple of Heaven; but it had been so long since he'd visited one he'd forgotten how awe-inspiring the works of the Tekgod could be. Then he promptly forgot again when he stepped into the automatic kitchen and saw the long row of gleaming food dispensers.

The tekress dialed a vacuumized breakfast unit and set it before him. He devoured the bacon and eggs hungrily, washed them down with the hot coffee. When she asked, "Still hungry?" he nodded, and she dialed sweetrolls and jelly, and more coffee. He leaned back finally, gave a long sigh. "That's the first food I've had since my flyabout crashed three days ago," he said.

"You should have known it's unwise to fly in unpredictable weather. Why did you leave your mech-town?"

"Because I was frightened, I suppose."

"If you'd really been frightened you'd have cowered in your mechanized habitat like the others. You were curious, not frightened . . . That's encouraging."

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"Why is it encouraging?"

"That's a secret thought," she said, "arising from a personal attitude toward the *Zeitgeist.* I'm afraid you wouldn't understand . . . What do you plan to do now?"

He looked at her for a long time. He weighed the softness of her cheeks against the austerity of her eyes, tried to balance the fullness of her lower lip with the firm line of her chin. Finally: "That depends on you, Your Virginity."

Surprise widened her eyes. He saw her reach instinctively into her robe. "Explain yourself," she said, and her voice was so cold he could almost see her frosted words.

"I want you to take me to the Temple of Heaven."

The surprise in her eyes intensified, turned into disbelief. "And what do you expect to find there?"

"The Tekgod, for one thing. The way back to summer, for another."

"You're being quite presumptuous for a mere mortal."

"Am I, Your Virginity? I got up one morning and the grass was silvered with frozen dew. I'd never seen frozen dew before, and for a while I couldn't understand what it was. I went outside and it was cold. *Cold.* Before that moment, the word as applied to air had no meaning for me. Suddenly it had overwhelming meaning.

"The morning after that I got up and the sky was overcast and rain was falling. Falling furiously *in the daytime,* not softly in the night the way sane rain should, but *in the daytime.* I could not believe it till I went out and felt the rain on my face, and then I had to believe.

"There came a night not long after when the sky brightened blindingly at intervals, and the brightness was followed by deafening, demoralizing rumbles. More rain fell. The next day I noticed something else. The color of the leaves was changing. To red, to gold, to brown —to a thousand intermediate hues. And not only that, the leaves were detaching themselves, one by one, and drifting slowly to the ground . . . No, Your Virginity, I don't think I'm being presumptuous in wanting to find the Tekgod, in demanding an explanation. I think he *owes* me—and the rest of mankind—an explanation."

"I think he does, too," the tekress said unexpectedly.

"Will you take me to him, then?"

She lowered her eyes to her hands. They lay pale and immobile on the table. The long, sensitive fingers were tightly interlaced, and the fingertips were white. Presently: "Perhaps you are presuming a quality in me which I do not possess," she said.

"I'm presuming nothing. I'm merely asking a favor."

"The quality I had in mind was courage."

He stared at her. Her eyes were still lowered, still preoccupied with her hands. Finally: "You have a flyabout, don't you, Your Virginity?"

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"Yes."

"Then let me borrow it and tell me the way I should go."

There was a silence. Then there was the whispering sound of her robe as she stood up, finally the sound of her voice. "I'll take you," she said.

Haze hovered over the land, and through the haze the gold and red and russet of the new season showed, in the unpremeditated patterns of woodlands, in the haphazard outlines of fields and meadows. Now and then the sapphire loveliness of a lake drifted by beneath them, and once they glimpsed the serpentine ribbon of a river.

The tekress's flyabout was a one-man affair, and they were forced to lie close together on the horizontal pilot-bed. But, despite the severe limitation of space, the tekress still managed to maintain an inch's distance between their prone bodies. Lathehand was grateful for that: he was not used to consorting with tekresses, and sharing a bed with one, even when the term was figuratively applied, embarrassed him as much as it indubitably embarrassed her.

But an inch was very little, after all, and it could not begin to dispel the sense of intimacy which the situation imposed. Lathehand found himself glancing at her more and more often, marveling again and again at her symmetrical profile, at the soft swell of her throat. He kept thinking of a statue he had seen once—a sensitive impression of a nude woman that somehow abnegated the very sex it seemed to shout.

Presently she raised her eyes from the floor viewer, intercepted one of his glances. He noticed her long dark lashes, the way the golden hue of her skin-tight cowl intensified the milk-whiteness of her complexion. He wondered curiously what her hair was like: whether it matched the midnight darkness of her eyebrows, whether it was straight or curly, whether it was dull or bright.

Her gray eyes, probing coldly into his, disconcerted him, and he looked away. He culled his mind for something to say that would take the edge off his embarrassment. A question would be best. Tekresses were accustomed to answering questions, and he had any number of them to ask. "How could anyone destroy summer?" he said presently. "Even a Tekgod?"

"Strictly speaking, he didn't destroy summer. He simply deactivated the Meteorological Modifier and summer departed of its own accord, for the simple reason that the season wasn't summer at all—at least not in a meteorlogical sense, but fall instead."

"I don't understand, Your Virginity."

"You could hardly be expected to . . . The pre-tek period was deleted from the public mentors' tapes generations ago, and today only teks and tekresses are taught that there was a period in human history—a lengthy one—when men, instead of machines, worked, followed by an-

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other period when machines worked but had to be operated by men. Most of our present surnames are derived from the chief occupations of this machine-operation age, though our given names date back to a much more remote age . . . Anyway, weather control followed soon after the birth of automation and was integrated into the early Tekchurch as a matter of course. It seems fantastic, even to me, that there could have been a time when man had to accept the weather for what it was, had to endure its various and unpredictable moods; a time when months like January and June were associated, in the northern temperate zone, with the words 'cold' and 'warm'; a time when there were four seasons, instead of only one—summer, autumn, winter, spring—"

"What season is this?" Lathehand asked.

"Autumn. The last phase of autumn, in fact. Winter is near."

"Is winter worse?"

"Much worse."

"Then why did the Tekgod deliberately bring about its return?"

She dropped her eyes. "I told you before: I do not know."

"But you suspect."

"Perhaps."

"Then tell me. I have a right to know."

"A tekress is forbidden to discuss religio-technological matters with anyone who is not a member of the hierarchy," she said with sudden hauteur. "I've said too much already."

"I'm sorry, Your Virginity."

She acknowledged his apology with a brusque nod, and the conversation ended. When she returned her gaze to the floor viewer, he followed her eyes, saw that the Flyabout was passing over the ruins of an ancient city. Steel, over a period of 5,000 years, was as ephemeral as wood over 500; beams and girders that had once supported and held together fabulous tons of brick and mortar were now no more than occasional discolorations on crumbled masonry, and even the masonry itself had half-vanished beneath trees and vines and lichen. Lathehand had always wondered who had built the cities; now, in the light of his new knowledge, he understood that they were products of the pre-tek period. Man had built them, not machines. The concept was staggering, and he put it out of his mind.

Beyond the city, the terrain changed from a gentle drift of fields and valleys to a sequence of hills. The flyabout had been traveling north all day, and the higher hills were covered with a strange white substance. In the distance, mountains showed, and here the whiteness was more pronounced, extending sometimes halfway down the slopes. Snow, Lathehand thought wonderingly. Snow . . .

One of the hills caught his eye, not because it was covered with snow but because it was covered with something else. People. The tekress noticed too, and dropped the flyabout in a wide spiral.

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As the distance diminished, details stood out with corrective clarity: only the slopes of the hill were covered with people; the hilltop itself was reserved for a single figure—a man in an incongruous white robe. His arms were raised, and he appeared to be addressing the multitude with passionate earnestness.

Lathehand heard the tekress gasp beside him, heard her voice: "It *can't* be! Even a paranoid old man wouldn't be so deluded as to think that—" Abruptly she bit her lip, and he felt the sudden pressure against his thighs and chest as she threw the flyabout into swift ascent.

At that moment the white-robed man saw them. He raised his arm till his fingers pointed directly at the flyabout's prow. Blue light leaped from his fingertips, and the craft began to flounder and lose altitude. The tekress worked the controls desperately, but the ground rose up relentlessly, giddily, overwhelmingly. Then, at the last minute, the flyabout righted itself and settled serenely into the grassy hollow at the foot of the hill.

The tekress's face was white. As white, Lathehand guessed, as his own face probably was. It was some time before either of them spoke. Then: "We'd better get out of sight," Lathehand said. "He might blast us again."

The tekress shook her head. "I don't think he'll harm us."

"Then why did he knock us out of the sky? *How* did he knock us out of the sky simply by pointing at us?"

"I imagine he needed a miracle and was reluctant to deface the immediate countryside. We provided him with a convenient means for performing one."

Lathehand threw open the coping, climbed angrily out of the pilot-bed. "I don't know what's going on," he said, "but I do know he almost killed us, and without any provocation at all! I don't intend to let him get away with it."

The tekress had climbed out after him. She touched his arm. "He's gotten away with it already," she said. "Look."

Lathehand turned toward the hill. The men, women, and children covering the slopes were kneeling, their heads were bowed. The white-robed man stood imperially above them, arms folded, eyes uplifted to the sky. He was speaking, and his impassioned, vibrant voice rolled over the land:

"Is there one among you who doubts my identity now?" he demanded. When no one answered, he went on: "Once again I say unto you: My father is angry. In your pursuit of selfish pleasures, you have neglected him. You have taken his divine favors for granted and have given nothing in return. You have *lost* him, and now you must find him again—through trial and tribulation, through suffering and hardship; through me!"

The speech — or sermon — was over. The white-robed man started

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down the hillside, his audience making a path for him, falling in behind him when he reached the base. He headed straight for the fallen flyabout. When he reached it, he halted and folded his arms across his chest. He regarded Lathehand and the tekress with dark, almost luminiscent eyes.

He was quite tall, and his bronzed face was strikingly handsome—the brow wide and high, the nose almost geometrically straight, the chin firmly molded. Lustrous chestnut hair tumbled in waves to his white-robed shoulders in chromatic harmony with his short wavy beard. His robe seemed to absorb the pale sunlight, reprocess it, and then release it in soft shimmering waves.

"Follow me," he said abruptly, and turned and strode away. The people trailed after him like mindless sheep.

The words had been spoken in a tone that contained no hint of command. Yet Lathehand felt compelled to fall into line, to follow unquestioningly wherever the white-robed man might lead him. He glanced at the tekress, curious as to her reaction, saw that she had re-entered the flyabout and was systematically trying the controls.

Presently she climbed back out. "It's completely dead," she said. "We can never make it to the Temple of Heaven on foot."

"We can try," Lathehand said. "We've plenty of food . . . How far away are we now?"

"About two hundred miles."

Lathehand glanced at the sky. The sun was low in the west, disappearing rapidly into a brooding cloud bank. He lowered his eyes. The hills rolled bleakly away in all directions. Trees, standing in groups in the valleys and alone on the hills, looked dead, and some of them—the tropical ones scattered incongruously among the endemic oaks, maples, elms, and poplars—really were dead.

A wind was drifting down from the north. He felt its cold breath against his face. He returned his eyes to the tekress. "What do you think, Your Virginity?"

"I think we'd better 'follow him' —for tonight, anyway. We can leave our supplies in the flyabout . . . Perhaps we can start out tomorrow."

Lathehand nodded. Then: "Who is he?" he asked.

"According to him, he's the Tek-god's son."

"Is he really?"

The tekress sighed. "In a way, he is," she said . . . "Come, we'd better hurry."

There was a valley sleeping among the hills, a long deep valley scattered with trees, mottled with meadows, bisected by a brook. Poplars, their leaves yellowed by the first frosts, grew along the brook looking like huge stalks of goldenrod in the afternoon light: tall fall flowers with sturdy stems and pale, impromptu petals.

There was a settlement in the valley, and they started down the slope. The uniform dwellings were gray in

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the deepening shadows, their windows warm with light. People moved along the narrow, geometric streets toward a central square where the white-robed man was breaking bread.

Lathehand stared disbelievingly when they reached the square. There was but a single loaf of bread, but the white-robed man broke and broke, and the loaf never diminished. Not only that, the bread was rich and filling: Lathehand had been hungry, but his hunger vanished with the first mouthful.

He regarded the white-robed man with new respect, a respect colored with awe. Abruptly he heard the tekress's voice beside him: "Look at them! The gullible fools! All of them have duplicators in their own houses and yet they are so influenced by a change of setting, by an unprecedented situation, that they interpret a technological commonplace as a miracle." She glanced at Lathehand contemptuously. "And you're no different!"

"But *he* has no duplicator," Lathehand said.

"Not ostensibly. But there's probably one hidden in his robe."

"Why should he want to hide it?"

"Because miracles create awe. Technological gadgets do not. The Tekgod, even in his dotage, is aware of that."

"Your Virginity, that's blasphemy!"

She paled slightly. "Perhaps it is," she said. "But I'm glad I said it . . . Here comes your savior now."

The white-robed man had finished breaking bread and was approaching them. "Follow me," he said again, when he came opposite them, and Lathehand took the tekress's arm and they fell in behind him.

He did not pause till he reached the outskirts of the settlement. Then he turned suddenly and confronted the tekress. "You doubt me, don't you?" he said.

The white oval of her face stood out starkly in the darkness. But her eyes were clear and unafraid, her voice calm. "Yes," she said, "I do."

"I am the son of God," the white-robed man said. "I am the divine Repairman come out of the wilderness to reanimate your souls and to lead you back into my father's grace." He faced an empty plot of ground, raised his arm. "Let there be shelter!" he said, and a dwelling grew out of the earth. "Let there be light within!" Yellow radiance poured forth from doors and windows. "Let there be suitable furnishings!" Chairs and tables and couches took shape. "Let there be heat!" Steam condensed on the window panes. He turned to the tekress. "You still doubt me?"

She was shaken. Lathehand, who was shaken himself, saw the slight twitching of her lower lip, the trembling of the hand she raised to her throat. But she said: "I'm quite familiar with matter transmission."

"Machineless matter transmission?"

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"You have a machine hidden somewhere."

A pause. Then: "You will have all winter to look for it!" Abruptly the Repairman's voice rose, took on a shrill quality. "What are you doing in the company of a common male?" he demanded. "Why did you disregard my father's decree and leave your temple?" When she did not answer, he went on: "If you had evinced a vestige of the simple faith you see in the eyes of the people around you, in the eyes of your companion, I would have created you a dwelling fit for a tekress despite your wanton behavior, despite your dereliction of duty. Now I will create you nothing. If your companion sees fit to take you into this, *his* dwelling, he may do so; but you will not enter it as a tekress—you will enter it as an ordinary woman!"

The tekress stood straight and still. Her white face seemed choked by the tightness of her cowl. "You haven't the authority to deprive me of my rank," she said.

"I have the authority invested in me by my father who is the one God and the only God and upon whose side I shall sit in the Temple of Heaven when the ravages of winter have brought his children back to an awareness of *his omnipotence!*" the Repairman shouted, and, seizing the tekress's cowl in steel-strong fingers, he tore it from her head and ripped it to shreds.

He turned and strode away.

Scarlet usurped the whiteness of the tekress's face. It was as though the Repairman had torn her robe from her, instead of her cowl, and left her standing naked in the street. Her hair, a breathless mass of midnight, tumbled darkly to her shoulders, and she tried futilely to cover it with her arms as she ran sobbing into the newly-created dwelling.

Lathehand did not move. He wanted to move; he wanted desperately to run after the Repairman and beat him with his fists. But he couldn't. His awe of the son of God outweighed his anger.

He didn't know how long he stood there, listening to the tekress's sobs, but his limbs were stiff from the cold and the sky was pulsing with stars when he finally threw off his inertia and entered the hut—

For it was little more than that: neat, white, uniformly heated, divided into two main rooms—but a hut withal. The tekress was huddled in a corner of the front room. Her sobs had ceased, but her head was buried in her arms and her hands still tried unsuccessfully to hide her hair.

Lathehand closed the door quietly. He took a deep breath, slowly expelled it. Then: "I know next to nothing about the tek hierarchy, Your Virginity," he said, "and I would be the last to disagree with any of the rules and regulations by which it operates. But it seems to me that honest beauty is a rare thing in any of our lives, and that when we come across it we should not turn our eyes away from it, nor hide it,

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nor suffocate it . . . nor, above all, be ashamed of it, no matter what tradition says, no matter what convention dictates."

She did not answer him. She would not even look at him. Her arms were white and rigid against her temples, her hands pressed tightly upon her head.

"Your hair is beautiful, Your Virginity . . ."

Silence stepped into the room and sat softly between them. He saw her arms relax, drop slowly to her sides. He saw the artificial light touch her hair, disintegrate into a million microcosmic stars. Her eyes lifted to his. Once there had been ice in their deep grayness. He saw the last particles of it melt away.

She stood up, smoothed her golden robe. She did not speak. Lathehand stepped across the floor, opened the door to the back room, and stepped inside. It was identical, both in decor and appointments, to the front room. The Repairman, he thought wryly, was as sex-conscious as the Tekgod.

He returned to the front room, shoved the couch against the wall opposite the connecting door. The tekress had not moved. "I'll sleep here," he said, not looking at her.

"Yes."

"He said you were no longer a tekress," Lathehand went on. "His saying it doesn't make it so. To me you are still a tekress—and therefore inviolable . . ."

"Yes," she said again. He was perplexed by the tone of her voice. It should have connotated relief, but it did not. "The tradition you mentioned a moment ago," she said. "I—I wonder if you know *why* tekresses cover their hair."

"No, Your Virginity."

"I—I'd almost forgotten myself." She lowered her eyes to her hands. "It began millennia ago, when machines had women operators. A lathe or a drill press could be quite dangerous if the operator's hair became entangled in it, and because of this it became customary for women operators to wear head-coverings. The custom was discontinued when fashion brought about bobs and bangs and feather cuts; then, much later, when complete automation revolutionized our way of life and our way of thinking, it was revived and integrated into the early Tekchurch. It has endured ever since, though most of us have forgotten its origin . . ." Abruptly she raised her eyes. "You realize, probably, that the only reason I'm telling you all this is to make myself feel better."

"I suspected you might be," Lathehand said. "*Do* you feel better?"

"A little."

He looked at her. She was standing in the doorway that connected the two rooms. Now that it was no longer surmounted by a cowl, her robe was suggestive of a golden dress. Her hair lay like jet silk on the golden swell of her shoulder. Her eyes were wide and luminous, the corneas pinkened from crying.

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Her lower lip contrasted more sharply than ever with the strong line of her chin.

"Tomorrow we'll try to get out of here," Lathehand said. "If you want to."

"Do *you* want to?"

"Yes."

"Then I do, too." She turned and stepped into her room. "Good night," she said.

"Good night, Your Virginity."

She closed the door. Softly . . .

The world was white, and particles of whiteness sifted steadily down from the sky. Lathehand was frightened at first when he looked through the window, and when he opened the door and the dawn-cold struck him, he was shocked. Then, when he realized what the whiteness meant, he was bitterly disappointed.

He closed the door and stepped back into the room. "Snow," he heard the tekress say, behind him.

"Yes," he said. He had not heard her enter the room, and he turned and faced her. He noticed instantly that her hair was different. Last night it had been tumultously beautiful; now it was beautiful in a different way. It was smooth now, almost glossy, and fell to her shoulders in orderly waves. "I'm afraid we can't leave today, after all," he said.

"No."

"But the snow can't last forever. We'll leave as soon as it's gone."

"Whenever you say."

He felt uncomfortable, why he did not know, and he was relieved when a knock sounded on the door. Opening it, he saw a tall bearded man standing in the snow. "The Repairman's breaking bread in the square," the bearded man said. "Better hurry or you'll miss out."

Lathehand turned to the tekress. "I'll get a double ration," he said.

"All right."

In the street, the bearded man said: "I'm Pressman."

"Lathehand . . . Thanks for stopping by."

"No trouble."

They walked in silence for a while. Then: "What are they like without their clothes on?" Pressman asked suddenly. "Not worth a second look, I'll bet!"

Lathehand came to a dead stop. The question was in poor taste, but it was a perfectly natural one. He had heard many jokes about teks and tekresses in his day, and he had laughed as heartily as anyone else. A normal person could hardly be expected to take chastity vows seriously. And yet, instead of the mild annoyance which the question should have evoked, he experienced an immense, overwhelming anger, and for an insane second he debated on whether he should kill Pressman by strangling him, by beating him, or by breaking his neck.

Pressman shrank away, his face ashen. "In Tek's name, what's the matter with you?" he gasped.

"Get out of my sight," Lathehand said. "Don't ever come near me again!"

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Pressman almost ran down the street, disappeared around a corner. Lathehand followed slowly. The snow stung his face, cooling his rage, but his hands were still trembling when he reached the square.

The square was a busy place for so early in the morning. Men, women, and an occasional child waited in a long line at the end of which the Repairman stood barefooted in the snow, breaking bread from his inexhaustible loaf. The sight of their warm clothing made Lathehand conscious of his thin leisure slacks and blouse, and he felt the wind more keenly. He also felt curious eyes upon him as he took his place in line.

When it came his turn, he asked for two portions, and the Repairman obligingly broke them off and handed them to him. Lathehand tried to hate the man, but looking into those dark, deep and emotionless eyes, he could summon nothing but wonderment . . . awe. Deliberately he recalled the scene of the night before, and this time hate did stir in him. But somehow it would not rise till he was walking away with the bread in his hands, and then it was too late.

"Wait," the Repairman said.

Lathehand turned.

"You have no warm clothing."

He saw the garments in the Repairman's arms, garments that had not been there a moment ago. He accepted them, was about to utter his thanks, when he saw that there was clothing for one person only. "But the tekress," he said. "She needs clothing, too."

"I know of no tekress in this community."

Lathehand swallowed. He knew what he had to say. "The woman in my hut," he said, hating himself.

Immediately more clothing appeared in the Repairman's arms. Lathehand accepted it before he saw how cheap and coarse it was, and when he tried to return it, the Repairman looked over his head as though he were not there. He almost threw it on the ground, but didn't. Clearly, coarse clothing was better than none at all, and equally clearly, coarse clothing was all the tekress was going to get.

She made no comment when he handed it to her. She merely carried it into her room, then returned and ate bread with him. "Why is it so filling?" Lathehand asked when they had finished. "I've never tasted bread like it."

"It isn't bread: it's a condensed dinner camouflaged as bread . . . . After all, we wouldn't be of much comfort to the Tekgod's ego if he let us waste away through malnutrition."

"You mean the Repairman's ego, don't you, Your Virginity?"

She looked at him quickly, glanced away. "Yes, of course. The Repairman's ego . . . Please don't call me that."

"Why not?"

"Even tekresses have names."

"You've never told me yours."

She hesitated a moment, then:

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"Mary . . . Mary Machine. I—I don't know your name, either."

"Joseph Lathehand."

A silence settled around them, a strange silence permeated with a quality that Lathehand could not at first identify. The room, with its simple furnishings, seemed to bask in a warm light: the chairs, the table, the couch—a far cry, all of them, from the mechanized appointments he was used to; appointments that anticipated your every wish, that entertained you, that worked for you, that adored you . . . But, certainly, simple appointments were better than none, and there was a refreshing honesty, a certain dignity, about a chair that did not follow you around like a dog, a table that refused to devise new delicacies to delight you, a couch that would not make up reassuring dreams to tranquilize your sleep. Suddenly Latheland knew what the quality was—

It was peace.

The snow fell for three days and three nights. Morning, noon, and evening, Lathehand went to the square for bread. At night he went to the square to hear the Repairman speak. Attending the sermons was not mandatory, but despite the weather, everyone in the settlement turned out. Everyone except Mary Machine.

The Repairman spoke of many things, but he spoke primarily of mankind's indifference to the Tekgod. This indifference he said, stemmed from the average person's reluctance to accept the Tekgod as a real god, to relegate him instead to the position of a sort of supreme tek. This, the Repairman insisted, was sheer apostasy. The Tekgod was a *divine* being, and right now he was an *angry* divine being. The weather was a reflection of his wrath, and the only way to modify it and to bring about the return of summer was to come to him through his son and to accept him as a divine being.

Lathehand was bewildered. "I've never questioned the Tekgod's divinity," he told Mary Machine. "I don't think anyone else has. Why should he accuse us of a lack of faith?"

"Paranoia," Mary Machine said.

He was shocked. "But he can't be insane! He's *God*!"

"God or not, he has the symptoms of paranoia. And not only that, he's betraying another facet of mental instability: he wants us to fear him."

"But why should he want us to fear him?"

"For one thing, he's in his dotage. For another, he's apparently been reading history and has discovered that there were gods before him, gods who did not need to rely on technology for their divinity. Unquestionably, he's been reading about a certain god in particular, a god who—"

"But there's only one God," Lathehand objected. "There's never been another!"

"There have been many. The

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world is much older than you think."

Lathehand stood up, distraught. "You're a tekress. How can you say such things!"

"I say them because they're true. As true as the Repairman is false."

"But he's the son of God! You believe that, don't you?"

"With qualifications."

"Then why do you say he's false?"

She dropped her eyes to her intertwined fingers. "I—I don't know," she said presently.

Anger touched him. "You're lying!" he said impulsively. Then: "Forgive me, Your Virginity."

"There's no need to forgive you. I *was* lying."

"Why?"

"We may be here for some time. I want to preserve your peace of mind."

"The minute it stops snowing, we're leaving," he said. "So whatever you have to tell me, you can tell me now."

She shook her head. It occurred to him suddenly that even tekresses weren't above stubbornness. "After we leave, I'll tell you," she said. "Not before."

He had to let it go at that.

On the fourth day, the snow ceased falling. When he awoke, Lathehand blinked his eyes at the unexpected brightness of the room. He became aware of a vague tightness in his chest as he hurried over to the window and looked out at the immaculate new world, and there was a strange instability about the floor. Presently he realized that it wasn't the floor that was unstable, but himself.

Other changes in his physical *status quo* manifested themselves as he dressed. There was a dragging ache in the small of his back; his limbs were heavy; despite the fact that the room was cool, he was sweating. But in his haste to get started, he paid no attention.

When he finished dressing, he knocked on Mary Machine's door. She was already up and dressed. "Pack as many blankets as you can," he told her. "I'll get our supplies from the flyabout."

"All right."

He started for the door. Abruptly the room spun, and he staggered. Nausea rose in him. He saw Mary Machine's white face swimming in the gray, swirling mist that reality had become, felt her arm around his waist. He marveled at her strength at she half-carried him back to the couch, and suddenly he knew the coolness of her hand on his white-hot forehead. He heard her voice:

"You're not going anywhere today," she said.

It was an old, old word, so old that it had nearly vanished from the language; so old that only a tekress who had read too many ancient books would remember it at all—

Influenza.

The virus wouldn't have hit him so hard, Mary Machine told him—much later, when his delirium was

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behind him—, if he had been living in the pre-tek age. But centuries of summer had undermined man's immunity to his oldest enemy, and the mild but elusive virus that had been capable of causing a three or four days' illness five thousand years ago was now an omnipotent entity capable of keeping a healthy person flat on his back for weeks.

For a long time Lathehand thought he was going to die. For a long time he wanted to die. His dreams were cesspools of fears and repressions whose existence he had forgotten. His waking moments were little better. What made them endurable at all was the reassuring softness of a voice he could never quite place, and the reassuring presence of a white face, framed in midnight darkness, that was the same, and yet not quite the same, as a face he had known in a far happier reality.

At the beginning of the second week, he began to feel better. Mary Machine read to him then—not out of books, for there were none, but out of her mind. She had an eidetic memory, and he would watch, sometimes, while she closed her eyes and searched for a phrase or a line mentally photographed years ago, and invariably be startled at the unexpected freshness her voice would give to an archaic turn or twist of thought.

The books she read to him were commensurate with his recovery. In the beginning, there was one called *Ivanhoe*—a romantic fantasy which he found difficult to understand because it was based on a set of values for which his own thought-world could provide no criteria. Much later there was one called *The Brothers Karamazov,* another fantasy which he found difficult to understand for the same reason.

Finally, there was one called *30 Pieces of Chrome,* and this one he had no difficulty in understanding because it had been written during the early years of the Tekchurch. But, while he could understand it, he could not accept it, for it was a blazing indictment against the Tekchurch and against mankind. From its impassioned prose arose the startling accusation that man, after a few half-hearted and much publicized efforts to reach the planets, had turned his back on the stars and converted his science into "a contemptible lapdog dedicated to the gratification of its master's every whim." The end result was the glorification of universal automation and the apotheosis of the supreme tek who, from a strategically located ganglion, held electronic jurisdiction over every sub-ganglion in the world, and through them controlled the operation and maintenance of the vast system of subterranean machines and reactors that supplied energy to everything from a household mentor to the Meteorological Modifier itself. The over-all result was spiritual decadence, the increasing reluctance of married people to accept the responsibilities of parenthood and the consequent falling off of the birthrate, an unrestrained indulgence

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in the physical pleasures of the moment because of the Tekchurch's failure to come up with new concepts of "heaven" and "hell", and the popular identification of the latter concept with boredom. The author, Mary Machine said, had been tried by the tek tribunal for heresy, found guilty, and given the radiation chamber.

After *30 Pieces of Chrome,* Lathehand's recovery was rapid. Soon he was able to walk around the room, and not long afterwards he was able to spare Mary Machine the humiliation of going to the square for bread. On his first visit, he was surprised at the smallness of the crowd, and then it dawned on him that the virus had not singled him out in particular, but had spread throughout the whole country.

When he got back to the hut, Mary Machine was missing. A note on the table said: *I'm at the Diemakers. Their child is ill.* Up till now, she had had nothing to do with their neighbors—a logical reaction in view of the fact that their neighbors would have nothing to do with her. Apparently the Diemakers had suffered a change in attitude, or, more probably, had adapted their attitude to fit their situation.

Curious, he went out into the street and inquired his way to their hut. The wind had shifted to the south and the snow was swiftly turning into slush and dirty water. John Diemaker opened the door. There were dark pouches beneath his eyes. "Come in," he said.

Lathehand stepped inside. A little girl lay on a couch in the far corner of the front room and Mary Machine was kneeling over her. The girl's mother stood to one side, crying.

"We thought she might be able to help," Diemaker said. "Tekresses know lots of things."

"Can't the Repairman do anything?"

Diemaker shook his head. "He was here. But all he did was look at her and turn away. I—I didn't know what to do—till I thought of the tekress."

The little girl's moon-face was flushed, her breathing labored. Mary Machine's hand rested on the small forehead and she was speaking in a low, almost inaudible voice. Looking down at her, Lathehand caught her face in profile, and it was as though he were seeing her for the first time. Her face had intrigued him before because of its contradictions: the contrast between the full lower lip and the determined line of the chin; the clash between the austere gray eyes and the soft full cheeks. Now a new quality had appeared—a quality that eliminated the incongruities completely and brought every feature together into a supremely balanced composite that came very close to beauty. Perhaps as close to beauty as it was possible to come.

Lathehand couldn't identify the quality. It was too tenuous for him to put his finger on. But, watching her, he remembered suddenly the

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strange face he had seen during the delirious phases of his illness, and he realized that this wasn't the first time he had seen the new version of Mary Machine; that it had been her face floating in the mists of his nightmares, calming them and turning them into bearable dreams.

As he watched, standing there in the hot close room, he became aware of a difference in the background sound. The wind still moaned around the eaves, the mother's crying continued uninterruptedly, and the father kept clearing his throat at intermittent intervals as though about to voice a question he was afraid to ask; but beneath all those various sounds, the sound of the child's breathing had changed. It was even now, and quieter, and looking closer, Lathehand saw that the small moon-face was no longer flushed, that sweat no longer glistened on the little brow. The mother noticed the change then, and her sobs died away, and when Mary Machine stood up, she knelt at her feet and pressed the hem of the tekress's robe to her lips.

Two patches of red appeared in Mary Machine's cheeks. She pulled her robe away, raised the woman to her feet. "I think she'll be all right now," she said, and turned and left the hut. Lathehand followed.

In their own hut, he said: "I brought our bread. Are you hungry?"

She nodded. They ate silently, facing each other across the table. After a while: "The snow's melting fast," Lathehand said. "Maybe we can leave tomorrow."

"If you wish," she said.

"It's not what I wish that counts."

"Then nothing counts."

"I don't understand, Mary Machine."

"A woman can be many things: she is never one thing only. It's unfair to assume that the first person you thought her to be is the only person she is capable of being . . . You still don't understand."

"No," he said. Then: "Would you rather stay?"

She looked around the room, and he got the impression that for her the walls were no longer there, that she was seeing the whole settlement, perhaps the whole world. Presently: "Many of them are sick now," she said. "Many more of them will be sick tomorrow. And tomorrow and tomorrow. Is it right to leave them?"

"They're the Repairman's responsibility, not yours."

"It would be more appropriate if you said they're the Tekgod's responsibility, not mine. It would also be equally untrue."

"But what do you owe them? For weeks they've ignored you. For weeks they've made up obscene little stories about our relationship. Yes, it's true," he went on, when a blush darkened her neck and cheeks. "It's true and you know it's true!"

She spoke with difficulty. "What-

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ever they've said arose from the same frustrations and fears that have always afflicted human beings and probably always will. I have no right to condemn them for it."

"Then you'd rather stay?"

"Only if you do."

He sighed. "All right then. We'll stay."

For a moment he thought he saw a smile soften the corners of her mouth, but he couldn't be sure. He had never seen her smile before, nor heard her laugh—

It occurred to him suddenly that Mary Machine was a very unhappy woman.

The snow melted far faster than it had fallen, and the settlement became a quagmire of muddy streets. Then, one morning, the Repairman raised his arm and said: "Let there be flagstone walks among the houses and a flagstone pavement upon the square!" The problem was solved.

The influenza problem, however, was not solved. The epidemic grew worse, seemed to thrive on the warmer weather. More and more men, women, and children took to their beds, and when word of Mary Machine's curing the Diemaker girl got around, more and more people sought her out.

She was hardly ever home. Morning, noon, and night there was always someone who needed her, and she never refused them. Lathehand could not understand what powers of healing she possessed, but whatever those powers were, her patients invariably recovered. And it wasn't always a matter of touching their foreheads and murmuring a few words, either—though sometimes this simple treatment effected an immediate turn for the better. In the majority of cases she spent hours, sometimes days, at a single bedside.

Once, when she was employing the first method on an afflicted woman, the Repairman entered the hut. Lathehand, who was kneeling beside her, imploring her to go home and rest, saw him slip into the room and stand unobstrusively in the background. The dark, luminous eyes glittered oddly in the artificial light as they followed her every movement, and the expressionless face took on the hue of yellowed parchment. Several days later, Lathehand learned that he had used the same technique on another patient. The patient had died.

With the thaw, the ranks of the Repairman's followers swelled. The snow and the cold had convinced even the most skeptical that the change in the weather was going to continue unless they did something about it, and even the most stubborn that freezing in heatless houses would profit them nothing. Word of the Repairman's coming had somehow got around, and every day people poured into the settlement, beseeching him for bread and shelter. He did not refuse them, and the settlement overflowed till it covered half the valley floor.

Some of the incoming people had

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already been exposed to the virus; others were half-dead from it. And still they came, eager to see the Repairman's miracles, hopeful that he would restore the weather to its normal *status quo*. But, while they came to witness the Repairman's miracles, they stayed to witness the miracle of Mary Machine healing the sick.

She was a familiar figure on the streets, tall, hurrying, immaculate, and strangely beautiful, in the coarse gray clothes the Repairman had given her. A white kerchief covered the top of her head, but her hair spilled down in ritous darkness to her shoulders for everyone to see. People, when they met her, bowed and stepped aside. Some of them even made the sign of the atom on their breasts.

The Repairman, on the other hand, passed almost unnoticed among his flock. His nightly sermons were attended by mere handfuls of the faithful, and sometimes even they did not stay to hear him through. At first he gave no evidence that he resented the wane in his popularity. He continued to break bread in the square, morning, noon, and night. He walked the streets in the dignified manner that befitted the son of the Tekgod. Every so often, he performed a miracle or two. Finally he went so far as to move a mountain, but the performance faded into insignificance when, several hours later, Mary Machine performed the simple miracle of saving another human life. That night he failed to show up in the square with his inexhaustible loaf of bread and, later on, he failed to show up to deliver his equally inexhaustible sermon.

He didn't show up the next morning, either, or the next noon. That night, when he finally did show up—minus his bread but bursting with his sermon—he had a capacity crowd.

Lathehand stood with Mary Machine on the outskirts of the crowd. She had insisted on coming despite the fact that she had not slept for nearly two days. Fatigue had devastated the fullness of her cheeks, thinned her lips. Her eyelids were much too heavy, her eyes far too bright. By accident, his hand touched hers in the darkness and he was startled by the hotness of her skin.

"Mary," he said, "you're sick."

"No."

Suddenly she swayed, half-fell against his shoulder; but when he tried to lead her back to the hut, she resisted with surprising strength. "I'm all right!" she said, and the anger in her voice made him step back. Presently he realized that he was still holding her hand, and he dropped it hastily. The brightness of her eyes seemed more pronounced than ever: they seemed almost to glisten in the starlight.

The Repairman's sermon was brief and to the point: "Once again you have failed my father," he cried, "and once again my father is angry! There is nothing he cannot do for his children, nothing he would not

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do for them. But when they forsake him for a faithless tekress with the powers of a witch, his wrath is great. His discontinuance of your daily bread is merely the first manifestation of his displeasure. There are many more to come—unless you repent; unless you reject the false tekress and return to me, and through me, return to *him*!"

At first there was silence, then the scraping sound of feet on flagstones. People glanced covertly at Mary Machine, glanced quickly away. A murmur arose, gained in volume as it spread throughout the crowd. Abruptly someone shouted: "And if we do, will *you* heal our sick?"

The Repairman's face retained its undeviating impassivity, but the shrillness of his voice betrayed his fury. "Is that your answer?"

"Yes," someone else shouted. "What good is bread to the dead!"

"Then die!" The Repairman raised his arm. "Fall on them!" he shouted to the distant mountains. "Cover them!" he screamed to the surrounding hills.

The ground began to tremble. There was a rumbling in the distance.

"Wait!" Mary Machine cried.

The Repairman lowered his arm. Instantly the ground steadied and the rumbling faded away. She started through the crowd toward the center of the square. "Can't you see he's insane!" she said, when Lathehand tried to stop her.

"Then use your paralyzer pistol on him!"

She shook her head, freed her arm from his grasp. "It wouldn't do any good," she said.

He watched helplessly while she walked through the lane the people made for her. When she reached the Repairman she stopped and bowed her head. "What must I do?" she asked.

As usual, the Repairman's face provided no index to his mood; but again his voice betrayed him, this time not by shrillness, but by a pervasive purring note. "Luke Seven, thirty-eight," he said.

Without a word, Mary Machine turned, left the square, and started down the street to her hut. When Lathehand fell in beside her, she waved him back. "Trust me," she said, "and please don't interfere."

Minutes later she returned, bearing a basin of water. She set it at the Repairman's feet and knelt before it. Slowly, meticulously, she washed each foot and dried it with her hair. Lathehand watched numbly, forced himself to go on standing where he was. A gibbous moon showed above the lip of the valley and its silver rain glistened, almost glittered in her dark luxuriant tresses. Presently he saw her stand up, her head still bowed. Suddenly he saw her fall . . . . and he was running, then, forcing his way through the speechless spectators to her side.

He picked her up and carried her out of the square. Behind them the Repairman began breaking bread.

The southwind breathed its last

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breath and gave up the ghost, and the west wind came riding over the land like a furious Brünnhilde on a savage white charger. Snow fell again, not softly as the first snow had, but in slanted fury, in white and swirling gusts, spuming down from the hills and collecting in the valleys. The days were bitter with cold, and the nights haunted by the Valkyrie-voice of the blizzard.

Mary Machine made an ideal victim for the virus. Her lack of sleep and her overexertion had weakened her more than Lathehand had suspected, and he was dismayed at the rapidity with which she succumbed. Worst of all, while she could heal others, she could not heal herself, and there was no other Mary Machine available to come round and cure her by the sheer force of unselfish devotion. True, several of their neighbors did drop by and self-consciously offer their help; but their lowered eyes betrayed their insincerity. Lathehand turned them away.

Gradually he understood the reason behind their change of attitude. The Repairman had played his hand shrewdly, and even though Mary Machine had given the people back their bread by her act of humility, the nature of the act itself had destroyed their respect for her. And this, coupled with the falling off of the influenza epidemic—strangely coincident with the drop in temperature—had restored the Repairman to his former position.

Day after day, night after night, Lathehand sat by her bed. For a long time she was delirious, and during this phase she seemed obsessed by a coming event which she referred to as the "transfiguration." He humored her, though he hadn't the remotest notion of what the term meant. As nearly as he could understand from her vague ramblings, the "transfiguration" was a change which was supposed to occur in the Repairman's physical make-up at a prearranged date and in accordance with the historical episode upon which the Tekgod was basing the analogous "ministry" of his son.

Once she said: "We never should have let him stay in office for so long. We should have known that senility was inevitable, and we should have known that when he reverted to childishness, he would mindlock himself in his ganlion tower and make some childish gesture calculated to attract attention to himself. And most of all, we should have known that a childish gesture on the part of a man with illimitable power could result in the destruction of the world."

On another occasion, she said: "I sometimes think that in clothing mere maintenance men and women in the robes of priests and nuns and in forcing them to forego their sexual need, we have only succeeded in stultifying the ideal we tried so desperately to sanctify."

On still another: "The events that fashion ideologies sometimes reoccur, and the ideologies themselves follow soon after. Basically, history is a panorama of repetition."

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And once, in the middle of a dark and lonely night, she shocked him by crying out: *"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine! . . . I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys . . . The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart . . . I was asleep, but my heart waked: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, 'Your hair is beautiful, Your Virginity . . .'"*

Lathehand lacked an eidetic memory, and even if he had had one, there would have been no books in his mind. He had never seen one.

But, in common with mankind, he had certain experiences which he had never forgotten, and when Mary Machine's eyes cleared again, he told her of his life in the mech-town that had been his birthplace: of his mentors and their stereotyped lessons, of the vague shapes of the two pleasure-seeking people whom he had been taught to regard as his parents; of stalking deer in the animation gardens and bringing them down with his deactivator rifle, and then activating them again and watching them run brainlessly away; of his various exploits in his flyabout and of his various exploits (expurgated) with women . . . and as he talked, the conviction grew in him that he had no right to talk at all, that in all his insipid life he hadn't done a solitary thing worth recounting to someone else. But if Mary Machine was ever bored, she gave no sign; in fact, there were times when he could have sworn that she was absorbed in his every word.

Presently he realized that she was getting better. Her forehead seemed almost cool now, when he touched it, and there were vestiges of color in her cheeks. But she was strangely nervous, and her nervousness did not dissipate even after she was strong enough to walk. She questioned him again and again about the Repairman's activities, and insisted that he attend the nightly sermons in the square.

He complied. Once again the Repairman was talking to a capacity audience, and his voice, vibrant with a sort of hysterical expectation, rose above the winter wind in strident overtones: "Soon you will see my father in me, see me resplendent in his shining glory, transfigured from a mere mortal to a true son of God! And then the wrath of my father will rise to its glorious zenith, and the hills will come tumbling down, the mountains will tremble, the skies will darken and rain will fall, and the rivers will rise and cover the earth. Only those of you who believe in me shall survive!"

With each sermon, the hysteria in his voice built up more and more. At last the date for the great event was revealed: it was to transpire on the morrow. Everyone, men, women, and children, were to be ready at dawn to accompany him into the hills. Those who failed to do so were to perish in the coming flood.

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Mary Machine was still weak, but she insisted on going. Dawn broke, gray and lowering. The wind was still from the north, harsh and piercing. Lathehand took her arm, and they blended with the forming crowd—with the Diemakers and the Oilers and Welders, with the Shearmans and the Toolmakers and the Melters—and flowed with it, in the Repairman's wake, out of the valley and into the hills.

The Repairman chose the highest hill of all. He ascended it slowly, and with vast dignity. When he reached the summit, he turned and faced the people covering the slopes. Then he raised his eyes to the heavens and spread his arms wide.

The minutes tiptoed past on tiny, soundless feet. The crowd was silent, its multiple faces white. Mary Machine's face was whitest of all, and Lathehand saw that she was trembling. "I had to do it," he heard her murmur. "A mad god is worse than no god at all."

Someone in the crowd gasped, and Lathehand raised his eyes to the hilltop. A change was taking place in the Repairman. He had begun to glow as though an eternal brightness, hitherto repressed, were seeping outward through his skin, through his robes. The glow increased, became a radiant, pulsing red, turned slowly to yellow. Someone screamed. A man standing some distance from Lathehand, fainted. The yellow radiance brightened relentlessly to white. It became apparent, then, that something was wrong. The Repairman began beating his body with his hands, as though the brightness were unbearable. Suddenly his robes flashed into flame, disintegrated. The Repairman, naked, was definitely not a man. His skin started to flake, turned to ashes and drifted to the ground. The white radiance turned to blue. The Repairman's face blackened, peeled away; metal mesh glittered where it had been. A single agonized scream rushed from the lipless mouth, briefly rode the winter wind. There was a blinding puff of smoke, and abruptly the Repairman was gone.

Lathehand felt Mary Machine sway against him and he caught her in his arms. "Take me to the top of the hill," she whispered.

He led her through the shocked crowd. She was crying. On the hilltop, they paused beside the small mound of smoking ashes and blackened metal parts. She took a deep breath, waited a moment, then turned and faced the multitude. She straightened her shoulders. Her rich voice warmed the clear cold air:

"Go home to your mechtowns. The Tekgod is dead . . . *For, lo, the winter is past,* and *the rain is over and gone—*"

And suddenly the winter wind became a summer breeze, the sky brightened to blue, and the sun broke through the last absconding clouds.

"When I was a little girl," Mary Machine said, "I wanted a doll. My

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mentors told me that wanting to play with dolls was an atavistic yearning, and they refused my request. So I made one."

They had opened the windows of the hut and the warm wind blew through the room. Outside in the street, happy people were passing in the sunshine.

"It was quite an unusual doll," she went on, when Lathehand made no comment. "So unusual that, when my mentors called it to the local tek's attention, it was interpreted as my call, and I was immediately enrolled—confined would be a more accurate term—in the nearest tek convent. Naturally, the first thing they did was to take the doll away from me. But before they took it away, I had a great deal of fun with it.

"It could walk, talk, see, and hear, but in addition to that, it was a sort of a mechanical projection of my self-image. Wherever it went, I went too; whatever it saw and heard, I saw and heard too; whenever it spoke, it spoke with my voice. I was so closely allied to it electronically that I could actually feel its pain, and if someone had destroyed it while it was activated, I would have been destroyed along with it.

"Wanting to play with dolls is not a yearning confined to little girls only. Old men in their second childhood can experience it too . . . The Tekgod's 'doll' was a much more complex mechanism than mine was: it contained an inbuilt matter disintegrator, an inbuilt matter duplicator, and an inbuilt matter transmitter with a receiving radius of at least sixty feet. But essentially it was the same as mine: if you destroyed it, you destroyed its creator also." She dropped her eyes abruptly to the table where her white fingers lay tightly interlocked. "I didn't want to do it, but someone had to, and I was the only one with the opportunity."

"But you didn't destroy the Repairman. It destroyed itself."

She shook her head. "I knew that the Tekgod would, sooner or later, try to prove the Repairman's godhood beyond any doubt, and since he was following the pattern of an ancient episode, there was little doubt but that he'd employ a technological version of the 'transfiguration' contained in that episode. So when I washed the Repairman's feet in the square, I shorted one of the 'transfiguration circuits' in its heel. It was a simple operation and occasioned no pain, but even if it had, the Tekgod was so engrossed in his own self-idealization that he probably wouldn't have noticed. When he finally did realize that I'd spotted his subterfuge, it was too late: the 'transfiguration' was already taking place. And of course, when he died, his mind-lock on the ganglion door collapsed, and the Temple of Heaven teks were able to enter and reactivate the Meteorological Modifier.

"He'd shown signs of mental instability before, and we've been afraid for years that something like this might happen. Yet we were re-

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luctant to take him out of office because such an act would have been unprecedented. Traditionally, tekgods serve till they die, and then the Tek Council elects a new one from their ranks. So all of us waited instead of acting, and when you finally shamed me into action, it was too late. The Tekgod's paranoia had already become critical, and his 'doll' was on the rampage . . . And yet, for all his madness, he tried to give the world what it needs the most—a new Christ."

"A *Christ*?"

She nodded. "But of course he failed. He couldn't endow his 'doll' with qualities he himself lacked. The Repairman was a hollow Christ, a Christ without compassion, without altruism, without maturity."

Lathehand was looking at her. "A Christ, then, would be a person unusually strong in those three qualities."

"Yes."

"Would a Christ necessarily have to be a man?"

She was startled. "I—I never thought about it that way before," she said. "Perhaps not."

He continued to look at her. Abruptly she stood up and walked over to the door. Bewildered, he went over and stood behind her. "I am not a Christ," she said.

"You could be one."

Suddenly he saw that she was crying bitterly. "Can't you see, can't you understand, that before I am anything, I am a woman?" she said. "The Tekgod freed me from one sexless prison; now you're trying to lock me in another. Why? Am I hideous to look at? Am I an animated statue with stone breasts? . . . Or is it because you're not a man."

It was as though she had slapped his face. He seized her shoulders, spun her around. He kissed her savagely, tried to bruise her lips with his own . . . and lost himself in them instead. The sunlight pouring through the doorway turned her tears to drops of gold. Her hair was a soft summer's night. He reached up and touched it wonderingly—

"Your hair is beautiful, Mary Machine," he whispered.

EPILOGUE

It is one year later. The new Tekgod, alarmed at the continued decline in the birthrate, has decreed that all citizens return to their native mechtowns so that an accurate census can be taken. Joseph and Mary Lathehand have returned to the town of Joseph's birth.

They have landed their flyabout on the outskirts and have entered the town in search of a place to sleep. Mary is great with child. But the town is crowded with travelers and all of the stopovers are full, and the best they can do is a stable which the owner has converted into a makeshift apartment.

During the night, Mary cries out. Towards morning, a child is born, and a resplendent supernova rises in the east . . .

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deborah and the djinn

by . . . Lucy Cores

He was angry and ashamed. He hadn't had a minute's peace or satisfaction for several hundred years. . . .

DEBORAH ALLYN'S Chilmark neighbors, had they known about her Lamp, would have said that it was just plain waste of good magic, since she was already so all-fired satisfied with what she had. Life was pretty good, Deborah claimed. And why not? For one, she was lucky enough to be born and bred on Martha's Vineyard, which, as all Vineyarders know, was enough to put her ahead of the large percentage of the human race, who are off-Islanders. Then, her gray-shingled house, where the Allyns have lived since the beginning of time, stood on the likeliest spot in Chilmark, high up on Abel's Hill, so that on a clear day the upper part of the Island lay spread out before her like a beached whale. Her land went rolling down, over smooth green slopes of fine pasture land, through scrub, and over the sandy bluffs till it met the frothy surf of the South Beach. True, Noah Paddock's farm adjoined hers, but you can't have everything. . . . Deborah may have had a little trouble handling old Mr. Paddock, a spiteful, dried-up little parsnip of a man, who had always feuded with the Allyns, but she had no trouble running her farm single-

Mystery readers will remember Lucy Cores as the author of several delightful novels, published some years back, including CORPSE DE BALLET *and* LET'S KILL GEORGE. *Also published in the* Ladies' Home Journal *and the* Saturday Evening Post, *this story marks her first appearance, we gather, in this field.*

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handed and enjoying every moment of it. She was a tall strapping young woman, just on the right side of thirty, with just about the sunniest disposition in Chilmark. She had level blue eyes that looked through you and seemed to smile a little, in a good-natured way, at what they saw, and the Island sun had given her cheeks and hair a special glow.

As for the Lamp—it turned up, the way most everything on the Vineyard does, at an auction given every year early in June by the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee of the Dunke's County Historical Society at the West Tisbury Grange. Deborah got it for fifty cents. She had a special liking for old oil lamps, preferring their soft yellow glow to the hard electric light. A few days later she picked it up to clean it. One good rub was enough: before she could put the cloth down, a husky Djinn had materialized out of the lamp's chimney and was standing there, filling Deborah's kitchen. His dark blue whiskers curled like smoke over his big bare chest, and his face, under the regulation turban, was set in patient but gloomy lines.

"Hail, mistress! I am the Djinn of the Lamp, here to do your bidding. Command me as you will." He uttered this conventional greeting in a rather perfunctory manner, Deborah thought, without any real pep to it, as if he had had to repeat it a great many times. "Well," he went on, "what'll it be? What is your will? Shall I plumb the depths of the ocean and bring you a chest or so of sunken treasures? Shall I burrow into the inner bowels of the earth and fetch you diamonds and rubies? Or build you a castle? Those are some of the more popular items that the ladies usually ask for."

He rattled all this off in such a weary let's-get-it-over-with sort of patter that Deborah had to smile. "Thank you very much," she said, "but I wouldn't dream of putting you to all that trouble. We don't go in for fancy jewelry on the Vineyard —as for a castle I guess it'd look pretty silly on Abel's Hill; and besides, there are some pretty strict building regulations in Chilmark. . . . But it was very nice of you to suggest all those things, and I appreciate it."

Like most people born on the Vineyard, Deborah had natural courtesy and always went out of her way to put an off-Islander at ease.

"As you will," said the Djinn. "Another item that's very much in demand is a marriageable prince. They're not as easy to locate as they used to be; however, I still could lay my hand on one if required. . . ."

This time Deborah laughed outright. "Now you sound like everybody here in Chilmark: they're all trying to marry me off. No, thanks —when I get around to marrying, it'll be someone I pick myself. Besides, I'm not figuring on leaving the Island."

The Djinn made a low salaam pulling at his beard in a harried sort

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of way. "Let's see now—no treasures, marine or otherwise, no castles, no princes . . . Well, would my mistress desire . . . ?"

"You know what?" said Deborah interrupting him. "You're too darn conscientious. One minute out of the lamp and look at you, raring to get back to work, digging for diamonds and moving castles. Why don't you take it easy for a bit? Nobody's rushing you. . . . When did you eat last?"

"Eat?" said the Djinn, a bit dazed. He thought a little: "I seem to remember sampling human fare a couple of hundred years ago."

"Landsakes," said Deborah, shocked, "the way you men forget about your meals when you're working. You must be starved! Now, you sit right down and don't say another word till you've had something to eat. You better take that chair, it's the strongest. It's the only one my father was ever comfortable in: he was a big man, like all the Allyns, though nowhere near your size. . . ."

The Djinn sat gingerly in the chair, with his big bare feet pulled out of Deborah's way; his great black oriental eyes rolled from side to side, following her as she bustled around the kitchen.

"I certainly hope," said Deborah a little while later, "that you like New England cooking." The question was purely rhetorical since by that time the Djinn had finished five bowls of qauhaug chowder, six platefuls of pancakes, with beach plum jam, and was starting on his second pie. "I do have a pretty light hand with the pie crust even if I say so myself. Now just don't stint yourself—I know you must need a lot of energy in your line of work. It's a pleasure to watch a big man eat. . . ." She sat down across the table from him and watched him smilingly. Although a big eater, he was a neat and quiet one—in fact, his manners in general were excellent, for a heathen Djinn, Deborah thought. An idea struck her. "Excuse me," she said impulsively, "but do you suppose it would be against the rules to make a few changes in your appearance. Like that beard, for example . . ."

The Djinn raised his whiskery face out of his cup of coffee. He looked genuinely hurt. "I am sorry if my appearance offends," he said stiffly. "This has been my working costume for many thousands of years and nobody has objected to it before. Naturally, if it is repulsive, I can take on any shape my mistress suggests . . ." He pushed away his pie, unfinished.

"Land sakes, don't you be so sensitive," Deborah cried, dismayed. "You're a fine figure of a Djinn, as you are, and I wouldn't dream of changing you. All I had in mind was your trimming your beard and getting dressed up nice, so you could take me to the square dance they're giving tonight at the Chilmark Tavern."

"Square dance?" The Djinn raised his huge hands to his tur-

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banned head and tried it in a gingerly way, as if to make sure that it was still screwed on.

"Oh, come on," Deborah cried, giving him a friendly little push, "it'll be good for you. Time you had a little fun, after all the fetching and carrying you had to do all those years. Now, you just run along and get yourself ready. I'll be expecting you at nine. I understand they have some fine new shirts on sale at Brickman's in Vineyard Haven."

The Djinn faded slowly with a look of extreme bewilderment on his face.

Deborah dressed for the dance that evening in a pleasantly unaccustomed sort of flutter. When you've lived on the Island all your life, you get to know everybody by heart, and there are few surprises left, which is a restful and comfortable arrangement; but sometimes a change is nice, Deborah thought; and there's nothing that can add flavor to a square dance like being taken to it by someone new. So Deborah put on an off-the-shoulder blouse and a blue quilted skirt with a special swirl to it, and a string of her grandmother's pink quartz beads at her throat; also she dug into Grandfather Allyn's sea chest for a Persian shawl he had brought back from his travels to the Orient. It was an outlandish but handsome piece of goods, glowing with strange saffron colors and figured all over with arabesques.

"Ought to make him feel right at home," Deborah said, chuckling, as she wrapped herself in it and sat down in the parlor to wait for her escort.

The clock struck nine and as the last chime died away, a miraculously transformed Djinn stood before her. He was now wearing fawn-colored doeskin trousers, hobnailed boots and a bright plaid shirt. Nothing was left of his beard except a blue tinge on his large chin but he kept his mustache which curled up fiercely on both sides of his nose. He reminded Deborah of the Syrian rug salesman who had come to the Vineyard a couple of years ago and squired her around some, before moving on. Deborah even felt a reminiscent flutter in her breast as she looked at the Djinn, who stood before her shuffling his feet and looking sheepish.

"Do I find favor in my mistress' eyes?" he inquired diffidently.

"You certainly do." Deborah was enthusiastic. "Djinn, you look just wonderful, and I'll be proud to be escorted by you to the dance. It's getting late now so we'd better start . . . I guess we'd better take the station wagon."

"As you wish," said the Djinn with a salaam. He picked her up with one hand, the station wagon with the other, and in a twinkling of an eye deposited them at the door of Chilmark Tavern.

"My, but you're strong," said Deborah admiringly, getting her breath back. She patted her hair into place and looked around her with some trepidation. To her relief, everybody

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was already in the Tavern. A trio of violin, accordion and guitar could be heard tuning up and Charley Pease was saying, with a precise sort of twang, "Choose your partners and form your sets." She took the Djinn's arm. "Let's go in now. They're just beginning the Virginia Reel. You just listen to Charley—he's the best caller on the Island—and sort of follow me and you'll be all right. . . ."

And so he was. After a few bad starts, which sent the other couples in his set going down like ninepins, he caught on and in no time at all was going through the most complicated figures as if he'd been going to square dances all his life. He turned out to be a fine energetic dancer, the kind that makes himself felt. When he swung a girl, she would skim in the air with her feet parallel to the floor, and when he led the line around the head couple in the grapevine twist, they all flew out straight behind him like a tail on a kite. Deborah could see that he was enjoying himself thoroughly; even when he wasn't dancing, but just waiting his turn, he would keep time, making the hall shake as he tapped a huge foot.

Deborah was enjoying herself, too; it wasn't often that she had a chance to dance with a partner taller than she was; she loved being swung till she was dizzy without her partner having to brace himself; and when the Djinn would put his huge arm around her waist to promenade her home it made her feel downright dainty. She was pleasantly aware, too, of conjecturing whispers and glances floating their way from the big table where the members of the Chilmark Ladies Club were serving the refreshments.

"Having fun?" she asked the Djinn, as they came up with some difficulty from diving for the oyster, diving for the pearl.

"Fun?" The Djinn threw his head back and laughed. His great white teeth flashed blindly in a cavernous mouth and the sound of his laughter was both fearsome and merry like thunder in the hills; the music was drowned out and the other dancers stopped and stared and after a moment laughed, too. "Why, in all the thousands of years I've worked on this earth I've never had such fun before!"

Deborah found this confession a bit pathetic; in fact, when she thought of the poor blundering hulk of a Djinn spending all those years running errands and never having a smitchin of fun, she felt quite warm with indignation. "A crying shame, too," she commented. "But all you big good-natured men always get put upon, somehow."

"But I'm not a man," said the Djinn humbly. "I'm just a Djinn."

"So you are," said Deborah, taken aback. "I keep forgetting. You certainly look like a fine figure of a man, particularly now that I've gotten you to change your outlandish clothes. . . ."

"Praise to Allah, my mistress, that it was you picked up that

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lamp," said the Djinn fervently, whirling her around and putting her down as light as a feather. "I shall be your faithful slave till the end of time." And he fixed his big black eyes on her with such doglike devotion that she found herself blushing.

All this was duly noticed and commented upon and between the dances Deborah had to submit to the genteel but thorough investigation by the Chilmark ladies, an accepted ritual that takes place whenever a marriageable young woman brings a new man to an Island social function.

"What beats me is when did he get here?" said Mrs. Melantha Baker, who sent in social notes to the *Vineyard Gazette,* and prided herself on keeping track of everybody's arrival and departure. "Nobody saw him getting off the Ferry, and if he came on his own boat where is it docked? Not at Menemsha because I asked around. . . ."

Deborah merely smiled mysteriously.

"What did you say his name was?"

"And his occupation?" put in Mrs. Izaak Norton, whose husband always needed able-bodied help in his shipyard.

"Djinn," said Deborah truthfully replying to both questions.

"Jean? Is he a French fellow? Looks more like an Armenian or some such, what with those big black mustachios . . ."

"Anyways, a foreigner." That was Mrs. Ezra Gosnold sniffing her thin nose disapprovingly. Deborah knew she was thinking about the Syrian rug salesman. "You always were pretty notional, Deborah, for an Allyn. I only hope . . ."

"Oh, it's not like that at all," said Deborah serenely. "He's just doing some work for me. Anyhow," she couldn't help adding, "I wouldn't be surprised if his family went back further than the Allyns —or maybe even the Gosnolds." This remark was disregarded as pure sauce, since, as everybody knows, nobody could go back further than the Gosnolds who were there when God made the Vineyard.

"Anyway," Mrs. Enoch Flanders, a round and comfortable body, said smugly, "this Jean can certainly appreciate good cooking." She caught his eye and smiled benignly and the Djinn gave her one of his beautiful low salaams, wiping off the crumbs of her famous chocolate and coconut cake with lemon frosting from his mustache. "He certainly has lovely manners," Mrs. Flanders commented and Deborah felt a glow of proprietory pride. "And a good dancer, too. I haven't been swung around like this since I was a very young girl—boys nowadays haven't the muscles for it . . ." She gave Deborah a pat. "You could do worse, my dear, even if he is an off-Islander."

After the dance was over, Deborah and her Djinn departed in a more conventional manner than they had arrived. This time Deborah got in at the wheel of her car, while the

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Djinn squeezed uncomfortably into the seat next to her, the top of his head making a bulge in the roof of the car. It was a pretty June night, fresh and windblown, with the moon sailing the sky like a pert boat. They rolled along sedately lurching gently on the country road and slowing up to let the rabbits scuttle out of their way. Presently Deborah noticed that the Djinn had lost his good spirits; he seemed to sag beside her like an oversized balloon losing air.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked him finally, when they got home. "I thought you had such a good time at the dance."

The Djinn heaved such a big gusty sigh that Deborah's shawl ballooned out like a spinnaker behind her. "Allah knows I was enjoying myself," he said. "And my heart is so full of gratitude that I fear it may burst." He slapped his chest producing a hollow sound like an empty barrel. "If I could but help you to your heart's desire, oh, kindest of mistresses, I should be happy to be drawn and quartered or roasted on a slow flame, or undergo any other such discomfort. . . ."

"No need for that," said Deborah, laughing a little, but at the same time touched at the big fellow's evident earnestness. "I'll think of something you could do for me, if that's what's bothering you. As a matter of fact, I have the very thing in mind. It's that piece of land right next to mine. Noah Paddock owns it and the only reason he won't sell, is just pure contrariness. My father and he had a disagreement years ago and he'd rather see that farm go to rack and ruin than sell it to me. Well, I've tried to get it by all the natural means, so I guess I might as well try the supernatural. If you'd get me that land, Djinn, I'd be much obliged. And now I guess I'll say goodnight." She smiled at him. "I had a nice time, too."

The Djinn didn't say anything. Suddenly, he just wasn't there anymore, just the moonlight pouring in a silver stream where he had been standing. Deborah went into the house humming to herself. She was just getting ready to turn in when the Djinn startled her by materializing again unexpectedly in her parlor. He loomed before her, a picture of massive misery, his swarthy face pasty-pale, his eyes rolling desperately, "I can't go through with it," he groaned out.

"Now what's the matter?" Deborah asked. "You look downright sick . . . Can't you tell me what's troubling you?"

"It's the Lamp," said the Djinn, grating the words out through his big white clenched teeth.

"Your lamp? What about it?"

"Well . . ." The words seemed to stick in the Djinn's throat. Finally, he brought them out with a deep-chested groan that reminded Deborah of the time her prize bull had pneumonia. "Woe, is me, my mistress! That lamp is no good!"

"What do you mean?" Deborah cried.

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He explained it to her, with many gusty sighs. It seemed that there was a whole consignment of magic lamps distributed around the world. Inevitably, a couple of them were defective—they didn't work the way they were supposed to. And this was one of them.

"You mean you can't really wish on it?"

No, it wasn't quite like that, the Djinn told her. You got your wishes all right, no matter how extravagant they were—("and you have no idea," said the Djinn reminiscently, "how greedy and unreasonable humans can be. When I remember some of the things I was told to do!")—but, somehow, everything you wished for and got turned out sour, so that in the end you would have been much better off not wishing for anything at all. "And that's what hurts me most," he said sadly, "to know that if I fulfill the very small and reasonable task that you have imposed upon me, it would be sure to lead to no good and perhaps even hurt you."

Deborah thought it over and her level brows drew together in a frown. "Well, now," she said, "I can't say I like this. When I get a magic lamp, I expect it to be a magic lamp in good working condition, and I can't help being a little riled when it turns out to be a fraud. Why, that's practically a breach of contract, isn't it?" She looked at the Djinn, drooping guiltily before her and her voice softened. "Now, I don't want you to think I'm blaming you. As a matter of fact, it was darn nice of you to tell me. Saved me a lot of trouble, like as not."

"How could I do otherwise? I couldn't bear to think of harm coming to you. But I am angry and ashamed that it should be so," said the Djinn, his eyes flashing under the black brows and his voice rumbling low and angry. "I have had the custody of this accursed lamp for several hundred years, ever since it was first put out on the market, and it hasn't given me a minute's peace or satisfaction. Do you think I've liked doing all this hard work, running from one end of the world to the other fetching the glittery junk that you humans call treasures? Or carrying castles to a more convenient location? And all for what? For nothing! Because everything turns out badly, anyhow, and you and the lamp end up on a rubbish heap waiting for the next victim."

"Well, I think it's a shame, said Deborah indignantly, "to assign a good honest worker to a shoddy piece of merchandise like that. Something should be done about it!"

The Djinn merely shrugged his shoulders and remarked with typical eastern fatalism: "Kismet."

"We'll see about that," said Deborah, who rather prided herself on her business sense. She sat down on her rocker and rocked, thinking hard, while the Djinn settled himself cross-legged in the corner and watched her anxiously. Originally

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she had thought up the task merely to please the Djinn; but now her New England sense of justice was outraged and she'd be darned, she thought, if she would allow herself to be done out of her rights.

Presently she smiled in a pleased way and stopped rocking.

"I think I've got it," she told the Djinn. "You just go right ahead and get Noah Paddock's land. *But*—and that's the trick—you're not getting it for me. I don't have to be the owner. I don't want it anyhow—all I've ever really wanted was to get rid of a pesky neighbor. So I don't care who has it—as a matter of fact, you can be the owner. "Yes," she said with satisfaction, "that'll be the best, and legally we're quite safe on that deal, don't you think?"

"My mistress," the Djinn pronounced, wagging his head in wonder, "is as subtle as a serpent."

"Well, the Allyns have always been considered smart traders," Deborah told him modestly. "I think I'll say good night now. I suggest you get plenty of rest before you tackle Noah Paddock — he's got the prickliest tongue on the Island. It's no pleasure to do business with him."

The Djinn disappeared, with a long backward look of admiration, and Deborah went to bed, feeling quite pleased with herself. Her dreams that night were agreeable ones: she dreamed that she was again being transported through the air by the Djinn. He was holding her very carefully and tenderly in his powerful arms and his mustache was tickling her ear.

The first thing she saw when she woke up early the next morning was the Lamp standing on the dressing table by her bedside where she had put it; looking like any old oil lamp. Smiling she reached for it and was about to rub it, when she recalled just in time that she was in her nightgown, not a fit garment in which to receive callers. I'll get dressed and call him for breakfast, she thought, as she got out of bed and she smiled as she thought of him putting away her pancakes with his big black eyes fixed worshipfully on her. "I'm getting some old fond of that Djinn," she reflected, running a comb through her bright long hair.

Just then she heard the telephone whirring hoarsely in the kitchen and ran down to answer it.

"Well, Deborah, you can stop pestering me about buying my farm now." When Noah Paddock had bad news to tell you, he didn't fool around with the preliminaries but got right down to it. "I just sold it. Thought you'd like to know. I guess you Allyns can't have it your way all the time."

"Sold your land? To whom?

"I don't know—some foreigner. A big hefty fellow with a whale of a black mustache. Woke me up in the middle of the night and said he wanted to buy the farm. I was so riled I almost let him have a barrelful of gunshot only he pulled out a roll of bills big enough to choke a horse. Offered me ten times what

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the place is worth, the poor sucker, so I sold it to him. So you got a new neighbor, Deborah. Shouldn't be surprised if he was a gangster by the looks of him." He hung up with a spiteful cackle.

Deborah finished dressing, humming to herself as she did. It was a lovely morning. The birds were all trilling together in a chorus and the morning mists were rising up rapidly from the slopes of Abel's Hill, like thin white curtains drawn up to let in the view of a sun-flooded world. She took time to tuck in a blue scarf at the neck of her shirt, and give an extra smooth-over to her hair before she picked up the lamp and rubbed it.

Nothing happened.

Deborah rubbed and rubbed till the brasswork shone, but to no avail. The Djinn didn't appear. Finally she gave it up. "Looks like I must have dreamed him," she said to herself, and at the thought her heart grew unaccountably heavy and all the brightness seemed to go out of the morning. But when she stepped outside on her way to the barn to milk the cows, there was her Djinn, sitting on the porch steps, his great hulking shoulders bowed disconsolately, his head sunk low on his broad chest.

"Why Djinn!" Deborah dropped the milking cans with a great clatter. Surprisingly the morning was bright again. "What happened? I rubbed and rubbed . . . How come you're waiting outside?"

Receiving no answer she sat down next to him on the steps. He looked so big and helpless and disconsolate that she couldn't help throwing a protective arm about his great bowed shoulders. "Is anything wrong?"

The Djinn nodded sadly. "They threw me out of the Guild. The Djinn Guild. For revealing professional secrets."

"They never did!"

"The law is that when a Djinn transgresses, all his magic powers are stripped from him and he's got to retain whatever shape he had taken on at that moment." He shuddered. "When I think of some of the shapes I've had to take on while doing my work . . ."

"Then you mean you're no longer a Djinn."

"That's right."

"Then—then what are you?"

"I don't know—a human, I suppose."

"Do you feel very badly about it?" asked Deborah softly. "About not being a Djinn any more, I mean. Because, you know, it's not so bad being a human."

The Djinn thought it over. "Well of course after one's been a Djinn for a couple of thousand of years, it is a little hard to make a change. And being a human hasn't seemed an enviable thing—that is, not until last night." He looked at her timidly. "Was it wrong of me to come back here? I couldn't think of any other place to go."

"Why you big oaf," said Deborah indignantly, over a lump in her

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throat, "where else would you go, for goodness sake? Why, when I saw you sitting there I was just so pleased and relieved I didn't know what to say." She patted him consolingly. "Now don't you worry about a thing anymore. I'll take care of you. I feel responsible for you, you know."

The Djinn blinked his eyes very rapidly and muttered in broken tones about her kindness in taking in a discredited and homeless Djinn.

"Some old homeless," Deborah chuckled suddenly as recollection struck her. "You're a landowner, don't you remember? Say, you aren't in such bad shape after all! You've got the Paddock farm and nobody who's got land to farm on the Vineyard got any call to be worried about making a living."

"But I've never farmed before," the Djinn faltered.

"You'll learn," Deborah told him. "You'll certainly be better off farming than going around peddling faulty merchandise." She smiled into his doubtful face. "And I know you'll like living here. There's no place like the Vineyard in the whole world." And she began telling him what it's like to live on the Vineyard. How in early April you can hear the tinklepinks tuning up for spring, and the beach plum puts out its creamy blossoms along the pastures and behind the dunes. And how in the summer time there are roses brightening the old fences with their crimson shower, and the pastures are soft and green for the cattle to graze on; and the cut hay smells sweet with clover, and a stray blackberry vine or wild rose mixed in here and there; and the ponds stand mirror-still in noonday heat. She told him about fall, clear and cool, the horse-chestnut days and the flowering of wild grapes, and later, the quiet mornings lying low in the reeds and watching the flocks of wild geese threading across the chill red sky; and of the peaceful winters, with the snowdrifts sweeping soft and white down the deserted roads. She mentioned the fishing; how the school of bluefish looks flashing across the Sound, and told him about the lobsters lurking sluggishly in the lobsterpots; and the black marshy grounds harboring scallops and clams; and how you hear the sea pounding softly against the beaches all year round; and in the winter, when all the summer folks are gone, the seal come to sit on the offshore rocks.

She told him all that and much more, and the Djinn began to perk up visibly as he listened; the curl came back into his drooping mustache, and his black eyebrows reversed their dolorous tilt, until finally he was smiling a big anticipatory grin. "Just as long as you'll be here to show me," he said humbly.

"I'll be here," said Deborah and smiled at him. "I'll be pleased to help you any time, neighbor. . . ."

"Did you hear the news?" Mrs. Flanders asked a couple of months later. "Deborah Allyn is getting

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married. To that foreign fellow who bought the Paddock farm next to hers."

"Doesn't surprise me any," Mrs. Gosnold returned, "always knew she'd marry an off-Islander . . . Wonder what the children will be like: never can tell when you bring foreign stock in . . ."

As it turned out the children favor both their parents. They are fine husky specimens, with their mother's level blue eyes, and their father's black hair. Deborah claims that they have also inherited his trick of disappearing into thin air, so that the only way to get them in for dinner is to rub that old lamp.

EXPLORING OUR SEAS

READERS of Arthur C. Clarke's prophetic THE DEEP RANGE, reprinted last winter (Signet, 35 cents) will not be surprised to learn that a report, some months ago, of a committee of the United States National Academy of Sciences, stated flatly that the study and exploration of the earth's oceans was "incomparably more urgent to the needs of national defence than space projects." The committee recommended a ten-year program of marine research, costing $650,000,000 (almost three times what is spent now on oceanographic studies), to begin immediately. It was stressed that "action on any scale appreciably less can result in the accentuation of serious military and economic dangers."

While all sectors of marine studies were involved, there was understandable interest in their application to defence problems. It was recognized that our knowledge is limited, in the main, to waters less than a hundred miles off shore, inadequate for present as well as for future needs. The Navy, with this in mind, has already converted three ships for research use as marine laboratories and has prepared its own ten-year research plan.

The possibility, with current tests in mind, was raised that water welling up from even the deepest parts of the oceans could discharge contamination to life-bearing surface layers, and thus into man's food chain.

Considerable emphasis (paging Arthur C. Clarke!) was placed upon developing ocean resources. This included research in "stirring up" the sea to bring nutrients from the depths to fertilize surface waters; the artificial raising of larvae food; transplanting food species to where they are most needed, and esturine and pond culture—with particular reference to the protein-starved neutral countries of South East Asia.

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beanpeas in the afternoon

by . . . David C. Knight

Mark Grindle was one of the Colony Chaplains. It wasn't in his nature to suppress any truth, no matter how painful.

FROM a green knoll of the system's fourth planet Schofield watched his wife picking beanpeas in the valley below. He and Grindle paused and let the warm radiation from 61 Cygni strike their backs. It was just past noon and the double sun had shrunk both their shadows to twin blobs at their feet.

Despite the shock of Grindle's news, Schofield could still thrill to Tavia's movements. They were fresh, alive, utterly youthful; the movements of a contented woman of twenty-eight. Like others of the Colony who had married Suspension Volunteers, Schofield preferred to think of his wife's age in terms of Active Span.

He preferred not to think of it in terms of Total Span.

As they had done aboard ship, the colony of star-migrants had continued to use the Julian calendar, although the practice now was to describe the year as Arrival *plus* the number of years on their new home. In two weeks it would be New Year's, January 1st, Arrival-plus-Five and he and Tavia would be celebrating their second wedding anniversary.

At times Schofield himself found

David C. Knight, a New York editor, will be remembered for his lovely THE AMAZING MRS. MIMMS (FU, *August 1958) and his earlier* THE LOVE OF FRANK NINETEEN (FU, *Dec. 1957). As he has previously written, and proves here,—"you can have gimmicks* and *human interest too!"*

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it difficult to believe that Tavia's age was officially 330, Total Span. Stop and figure it out, he used to tell himself. Tavia's Pre-Suspension age was twenty-six plus a few odd days. Then you added the Post-Suspension age of two, exactly the number of years they had been married after the epidemic of January, Arrival-plus-Three. That gave you twenty-eight, Tavia's Active Span. Of course when you added the official Flight Duration Constant of 302 established by the Colony's Astrophysical Society, you got Tavia's Total Span of 330.

Weird? Not really, thought Schofield. Not when you considered that the Suspension Volunteers had originally been provided for just such an emergency as the epidemic of three years ago. After all, forty other colonists besides himself had taken them as spouses, too. And in most cases they had turned out to be happy marriages like his own.

But now something unusual had come to light. Something as shocking to Schofield as it had been to Grindle who had come across it in re-indexing the Colony's flight logs and documents for permanent transfer to the administration building.

Tavia saw them now and waved. She shouted something which the warm wind whipped away across the valley into silence. She motioned eagerly to her husband to hurry and pointed down at the ground. Then she pointed to her mouth and made eating motions; her tiny daughter did the same in childish imitation. "Beanpeas," she repeated into the wind. "We're having beanpeas for lunch. You know how you love beanpeas." Tavia smiled at the name they had given the alien vegetable. It reminded her of the ancient truck farms in Delaware.

"Don, I'm a fool," Grindle said suddenly. "Eugenics Code or no Eugenics Code, there was really no need of telling you this. Tavia's Pre-Suspension son died over two and a half centuries ago. Certainly sufficient time has intervened . . ."

"But Tavia's son was aboard nevertheless—where he had no business to be," Schofield reminded him. The words were edged with bitterness.

The two of them had spent the entire morning in the Archives Room of the cannibalized ship. Grindle had shown him the proof. Together they had left the shell of the huge rocket which had been their home for so long and walked across the fields toward his farm.

Mark Grindle was one of the Colony Chaplains. He had married them himself soon after the epidemic. Schofield knew it was not in Grindle's nature to suppress any truth, no matter how painful. Even as boys together on the ship Schofield had never known him to lie. It was Grindle who had built the first church from logs he had felled and material from the rocket.

"She hardly talks of the ancient wars or people of Earth any more," mused Schofield. "She tries to forget. She wants this to be the only world for her now."

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"The human mind wants to forget evil," said Grindle. He put a hand on Schofield's shoulder. "Don, I know it seems unjustly ironic. A freak. And yet nothing happens in this universe that is not God's Will. I believe that."

"Perhaps," Schofield said. "I wonder what he was like, Tavia's son? Was he blond, too? Did he have the same laugh?"

Tavia might never have happened to him at all except for the epidemic, he reflected for the thousandth time. The heavy seals might never have been broken on the nearly-forgotten compartment of the Refrigeration Deck. The rows of mute Suspension Volunteers — chilled, kept perfect for over three centuries in their cubicles — might never have been disturbed in their Numylmethane slumber. But the deadly virus of Arrival-plus-Three had ripped into the Colony without warning like a malignant snake. Before their scientists could isolate even primary antibodies to combat it, the bug had reduced their numbers seriously, and among them had been Schofield's first wife. Now only in very private moments did he allow himself to think of that first wedding just a few short years ago (it was in Arrival-minus-Two) and afterwards the cheery apartment in Quadrant South of the ship and all the planning they had done in anticipation of Arrival.

They had had three happy years. Then the bug.

And then, Tavia.

The Eugenics Commission had had no alternative but to invoke the so-called Suspension Article, a clause of the Constitution formally titled Emergency Colonial Reproduction Through Mass Espousal. Originally all Suspension Volunteers had been carefully screened and, as nearly as possible, ideal specimens of both sexes had been chosen. (Schofield recalled the writings of the then-contemporary historian, Spencer Samuel, describing the crowds of potential volunteers, eager to escape the savage Population Wars, which had to be turned away from every starship.) Spouse selection had been arranged by the Eugenics Commission in the fairest procedure possible—by lot. Each colonist who required a new mate drew a number, waited his turn and then was ushered into the suspension cubicles where he had forty minutes to make his selection. On the face of it, Schofield reflected, the whole affair seemed like a cold and calculated laboratory experiment, yet in his heart realized the necessity for it. Unless the Colony wished to run the risk of losing the battle for survival, the usual time for natural selection and normal courtship had to be eliminated. Moreover, the Commission had strongly recommended that reproduction begin as soon as practicable after the de-suspension of spouses.

Eventually Schofield's own turn had come and he had found himself alone among the eerie cubicles, clad in heavy clothing against the cold,

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and faced with the task of selecting a life-partner in something less than three-quarters of an hour. He remembered how his breath hung in the air like a frosty balloon. He did nothing at all for perhaps ten minutes because it had seemed like some kind of macabre dream being alone among the cubicles of bluish crystal all tilted at precisely 45° for optimum inspection. On the left of the aisle were the suspended men to be chosen by bereaved women colonists; on the right were the women, among whom he must select one. Glancing suddenly at his watch which had been synchronized with the Commission's official timepiece, he saw that he only had some twenty-nine minutes or so left. He began down the aisle peering into the motionless faces, about each of which swirled a faint mist of the suspension agent.

All of the women were young and all of them were beautiful. And then suddenly among all the faces there was just one face. Tavia's.

On her cheeks had been droplets of moisture—tears—which the chemical had caught and preserved for more than three centuries.

Fifteen minutes ahead of time Schofield had emerged from the cubicles and the Eugenics Commission had recorded his choice.

As a matter of form they had given him an extract of the Terrestrial inventory which concerned Tavia. It was sketchy enough. Octavia Ogden was a young widow. Her husband, Ivan Ogden, had perished in the struggle for land domination near a region called Baffin Bay. Shortly after hearing of his death, she had applied to her local Star Migrant District. The lists however had been so discouragingly long that she had presented herself as a Suspension Volunteer instead, and been accepted. The extract made a brief mention of her son and that was all.

Tavia waved again and held aloft the beanpeas dripping their curious foliage. She made an imploring gesture, knowing that Don wouldn't hear her words. Cupping her hand against the wind anyway she called: "It's getting late, darling, please hurry; the child is hungry; it's almost afternoon." To indicate the passage of time she pointed to the fantastic purples and golds of the double star that was their sun.

"You're a lucky man, Don," Grindle murmured. "She's lovely."

Schofield hardly heard. His mind was still a puzzled, churning thing. He tried to focus it clearly on the morning's research. Generations. Family trees. Spidery genealogical tables diligently kept throughout the centuries. Somewhere, something. A little boy, Tavia's son, who shouldn't have fit the picture, and yet did. From the vivid Samuel accounts Schofield could almost picture those times . . . the press of war . . . the restless waiting lists . . . the urgency to blast off . . . the hasty inventory and countdown . . .

"Somehow they overlooked him," Schofield said at last. "I'm sure of

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it. Somehow Tavia's son got aboard and they didn't know it. Maybe Tavia herself arranged to have him smuggled aboard. Maybe she couldn't bear the thought of his growing up and getting killed like his father. However it was I'm not going to ask her about it. Tavia has my daughter now. She belongs to this world."

"Certainly they couldn't take the boy back after blast-off," added Grindle. "I suppose once they discovered him there wasn't much they could do except move over and make room for him. He was little more than a child at the time anyway."

"It was the fault of the original Eugenics Commission," blurted Schofield in sudden anger. "It was their job to see that the bloodlines were kept clear. Surely there were always enough people on board to avoid the slightest bit of inbreeding. Any *child* who's read a fraction of Samuel knows that the first requirement a Suspension Volunteer had to meet was that he or she possess absolutely no blood relationship with the crew or any of the star-migrants. And yet Tavia's son was allowed to marry—to have issue—and now the whole affair's back full circle."

Schofield's anger slowly subsided as the Chaplain spoke:

"Don, I thought at first I might have made a mistake in the indexing. I went over and over those old notations. You saw them yourself. In those days they made notes of everything. The yeomen of the First Flight Century were famous for their detail and I'm familiar enough with their handwriting to be perfectly sure there couldn't have been falsification. Of course if Tavia's son had had male issue, and succeeding generations had had male issue, your name might have been Ogden, too, instead of Schofield. You might have wondered why your names were the same . . ."

Schofield laughed.

"But our names weren't the same," he said. "Even if they had been it wouldn't have mattered. I never thought of reading her name on the lid, frankly. I just kept looking at her face and thinking, 'the blonde in the 5th cubicle, she's the one I want for my wife.' "

Beanpeas in the afternoon, thought Tavia. It sounded almost like the title of a book she'd read as a girl. She watched the diffuse rays of 61 Cygni catch the bright metal nosecone of the rocket; it was purely a trophy of Arrival now mounted triumphantly on the white slab of concrete on the opposite hill. Around it a herd of indigenous cat-sheep ranged peacefully. That other was so long ago, thought Tavia. She waved again.

Schofield felt Grindle's arm lightly on his shoulder before he started down into the valley. He felt very hungry now. Tavia was laughing and waving the beanpeas saucily. It wasn't every man, Schofield was thinking, who could be married to a beautiful wife and at the same time to his great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother.

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music for the space age

by . . . Stephen Lloyd Carr

Students with an equal enthusiasm for the arts and the sciences are important to our future.

A DEBATE on the content of the American education system was launched with Sputnik I on October 4, 1957.

The press, the man in the street, parents who had never attended a PTA meeting—all turned their attention to the course of studies being offered to our nation's youngsters.

The Carnegie Corporation retained Dr. James Bryant Conant, former president of Harvard, to conduct an extensive survey of our school system. A Rockefeller report was made titled "The Pursuit of Excellence, Education and the Future of America." Dr. James R. Killian, president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was appointed special assistant to President Eisenhower for science and technology. The National Education Association opened studies in various areas of instruction.

While the other studies were underway, the American Music Conference investigated its special area of interest. Other surveys already had touched on music.

For example, Conant named music as one of the three basic studies to be included in the curricula of

Stephen Lloyd Carr, in an article reflecting the views of the American Music Conference, points out the importance in these days of developing men who can draw on the experience and discipline of a variety of fields of knowledge before reaching a decision, and music's importance in this.

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all students—bright, average and slow.

What was this relationship of science education and music education? How did music fit into the basic educational curriculum? These were the questions AMC set out to answer in its investigation.

It was known that Dr. Edward Teller, the "father of the H-bomb," says of his piano, "it is the only possession that I really like;" that Dr. Albert Einstein, whose theories ushered in the "Nuclear-Space Age," loved his violin; and hundreds of other important scientists, not so well known, play instruments when they are away from the laboratory.

An AMC survey of instructors and deans of scientific schools from coast to coast found 70 per cent of them believed music helps develop creative qualities in the mind of a scientist. Two-thirds of the scientists in the survey said they were amateur musicians and more than 80 per cent said their children were playing instruments.

Dr. Hobart H. Sommers, assistant superintendent of Chicago public schools, summed up the findings when he pointed out that playing a musical instrument builds at least six valuable attributes—concentration, coordination, mathematical precision, perseverance, mental discipline and teamwork.

To enlarge upon this statement, AMC turned to an application of its principles in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, "the town the atom built." The community is a modern colony of scientists.

Oak Ridge schools are designed to produce an "all-around" individual, well trained in both science and the arts. The music program receives much emphasis.

According to the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association, composed mostly of scientists, "The general philosophy of the school music program is that music is primarily an aesthetic experience contributing to the all-around development of children; the all-inclusive aim in teaching music is to help every child develop a genuine, usable love for music, as well as to give him a feeling of success in one or more forms of musical expression.

"Technical skills are important only as a means to this end. Certain basic experiences, such as singing, listening, feeling of rhythm, playing and creating music are foundations for all musical activity. The music program in Oak Ridge schools is complete with all of the above experiences and strives to give each one proper emphasis."

To implement the scientists' ideals, the schools employ a full-time music teacher in each of the nine elementary schools, two in junior high school and two in high school in a community of 30,000 persons.

The children begin their music training in kindergarten. They are playing instruments in music festivals and programs before they finish the sixth grade.

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In junior high schools—seventh and eighth grades in Oak Ridge—the students continue their training. The school's orchestra consistently ranks high in festival ratings. The youngsters can take part in a summer music program, devoting eight weeks to their instruments. The junior high school band also performs on radio.

Oak Ridge Senior High School carries along the musical training in a program that includes a marching band, orchestra, vocal groups, and classes in "music literature, theory and harmony, piano and various string, wind and percussion instruments," according to the Civic Music Association.

A few of the high school students occupy chairs in the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra. There they may play beside their parents.

Prime mover in development of the symphony was Dr. Waldo Cohn, a biochemist who headed the plutonium project during work on the world's first atomic pile in Chicago. Cohn hosted musical evenings in his home when he first arrived in Oak Ridge. Soon his home would not hold the musicians, and the symphony was formed with Cohn as conductor.

Cohn conducted the symphony for 11 years, before accepting a Fullbright and Guggenheim fellowship to study in England for a year in 1955. When he returned in 1956, Cohn became first cellist in the symphony, now under the direction of Anton Raisis, an instructor in Oak Ridge schools. Cohn also plays in a string quartet whose four members have been performing together for 10 years, except when Cohn was overseas.

The scientists who are part-time musicians at Oak Ridge are not unique. Dr. Arthur Roberts, professor of physics at the University of Rochester, is a composer of music and a friend of Cohn. Roberts composed "The Overture for a Nuclear Reactor" for Cohn. The work was presented for the first time by the Oak Ridge Symphony.

Roberts used the initials of the Atomic Energy Commission—or the notes A, E and C—as the basis for one of the movements of the overture. Other musical notes related to nuclear energy were used in the structure of the other three movements. The overture is described as "a musical chain reaction," building up through the work and threatening to explode at the climax.

But the threat is overcome by a C-D discord. This means cadmium control rods have been shoved into the atomic pile, stopping the reaction. *Cd* is the chemical symbol for cadmium.

Rochester is typical of American universities where science and music flourish together.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, headed by Killian, also has an extensive music program. It includes a glee club, concert band, symphony orchestra and choir.

One of the best-known profes-

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sors on a distinguished faculty in both science and the arts is Ernst Levy, famous pianist, interpreter of Beethoven and composer—described by a music critic as the "Liszt-like genius of M. I. T."

Levy holds an advanced seminar course in music, designed for science education. The class usually is limited to about a dozen students ranging from undergraduates to fellows who already have received doctorates. Levy said he limits the size of the class to enable every student to participate in discussions. The students bring their interest in science into the class in Levy's apartment where they study such topics as "Principles and Techniques of Variation" or "Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*."

In the south, Rhodes scholar John Deutsch of Tulane is another case of proficiency in both science and music. Deutsch gives much of the credit for his opportunity to study chemistry at Oxford to his ability on the French horn.

"I believe the turning point in my academic career happened at a concert," said Deutsch, "when I ran into Dr. Hans Jonassen, my major professor. Two days before I had made 100 on his chemistry test. The two events so close together made him stop and talk to me.

"Everything built up from that. He offered me a job teaching freshman chemistry and he helped me with the red tape in applying for the Rhodes scholarship. Dr. Jonassen is completely responsible for everything that has happened to me since my freshman year.

"Then, three members of the state selection committee and two members oof the district committee are musicians. During my interview, one of them said, 'We should not send Mr. Deutsch to England,' and my heart went to my toes, but he finished with a chuckle, 'He's too valuable, he's a French horn player.' "

Another Rhodes scholar with an interest in music is Cadet Peter Dawkins, who has compiled one of the most outstanding records in the history of the U. S. Military Academy. Dawkins was named an All-America football player last season while captaining Army to an unbeaten season. He has been in the top five per cent of his class all four years at the academy and ranks seventh in the senior class of 501. Dawkins also is president of the class of 1959 and a member of the Cadet Chapel Choir. For recreation and stimulation, Dawkins has a guitar in his room for rare moments away from books or duties.

Dr. John Kendel, vice-president of the American Music Conference, says: " 'A' students with an enthusiasm for the arts and sciences are America's great advantage in its fight for survival.

"The totalitarian state makes no provision for developing the 'all-around' man who can draw on the experience and discipline of a variety of fields of knowledge before reaching a decision."

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the woodcutter's tale

by . . . Edd Doerr

I AM CALLED Hans and I am a woodcutter. My father before me was a woodcutter, as were his father and his father's father before him. I was born into the service of the Baron Gottfried von Mannheim, a noble and generous lord to whom I have rendered long and faithful service. The tale which I have now to relate is true, for, as God is my witness, I am but a simple man, given neither to fabulous inventions nor to idle wanderings of the fancy. I am, moreover, wholly ignorant of the things which learned men cause to be set down in books.

By day I gather wood for the fireplaces of the great manorhouse, and for as long as I can remember, this task has taken me deep into the great forest, where dwell the gnomes and the dryads. As I am a good Christian, however, I shun all communication with suchlike.

True—the demon did speak in his tongue, but it did so in a very strange manner.

One day, as I was bearing a heavy load of wood back to the manorhouse, I happened upon a most remarkable object. It appeared in the path not more than twenty strides from where I was walking and gave me such a fright that I was left unable to move. As I gazed upon this strange and terrible object, which

Sociologist Edd Doerr, who returned from Colombia recently, has been a teacher and a social worker. Recently appointed associate editor of The American Rationalist, *he has had numerous articles published in such publications as the* Liberal, *the* Independent, *and* Progressive World.

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had the shape of a hen's egg and shone like my master's best armor in the bright sunlight and stood taller than any man of my acquaintance, a door miraculously opened in its side. A moment passed and out of the object stepped a wonderful and fearful demon, attired in garments of the most unusual sort and having the form and features of a beautiful maiden. The demon's clothing glistened like the reflection of the full moon in the Tarn of the Three Great Pines and was fitted to its form as tightly as the breeches of a forester. Its flowing hair had the appearance of burnished gold and its lips were the color of a cock's comb. Altogether, the demon had, in God's truth, the form and resemblance of an exceedingly comely maiden, which gave me all the more cause for fear, as I have heard it said that the Evil One often sends demons in such guises to tempt and confound the unwary.

My fright at this strange sight was such that I forgot to cross myself. If only I had, perhaps the creature would have instantly betaken itself back to the evil place whence it came. But as it happened, I was unable to move as a great stone. The demon looked about slowly, for all the world like a flesh and blood maiden, and then fastened its evil gaze upon me. In terror, I dropped my load to the ground, and would have turned and fled had my legs not been possessed by a sudden weakness.

The demon advanced several steps toward me, then stopped and put forth its right hand. Then, in a soft and not unpleasing voice, it spake words to me in a foreign tongue which I did not understand, though, in truth, it sounded very like the tongue of travelers from the far north.

"What do you want of me?" I cried out to the demon, whose mouth was then transformed into an evil smile.

"You speak German," the creature said to me, as though a poor woodcutter should be gifted in the use of other tongues.

"What do you want of me?" I cried out a second time.

"Be not afraid," the demon spake craftily. "I wish you no harm. I wish only to converse with you." Ach, it was plain to see that the demon meant to beguile me for some wicked purpose which I could not fathom.

"Pray, leave me in peace," I called out. "I am a poor man and a Christian. I have no desire to have traffic with creatures of darkness."

The demon laughed, and, seeing my fear, advanced to within a few strides of me.

"Be not afraid," the creature said. "I am neither a demon nor a witch nor an evil spirit. I am a woman, a human being like yourself. I wish only to converse with you." The demon spoke in our tongue, though it did so in a manner that was exceedingly strange. Fear of the great powers of the demon grew upon me until my head felt queerly. Surely

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the demon was trying to take possession of me.

Again I asked, "What do you want of me?"

The evil creature smiled and spake thus. "Please do not be afraid. I am only a traveler. I come from a far off land called America, which lies across the great sea to the west of here, though perhaps you do not know it. Would you tell me what the year is?"

It was clear that the demon wished to trick me, for everyone knows that there is no land beyond the great western sea, only great dragons and sea monsters which devour whole ships. Yet I dared not refuse to answer, for fear that the demon might become angry and slay me. "It is the Year of Our Lord 1359," I said.

The demon's eyes became bright and it spake in words the true meaning of which was beyond my understanding. "Please, try to understand what I say. I am a traveler from a far land in the future, from the year 2059. I am a scholar, a scientist. I have come here to study your ways and to speak with the people who live here. I would like for you to help me."

Ach, the demon was asking me to help with its evil schemes. Oh, how I wished for a crucifix with which to drive off the evil thing. But, alas, I had none on my person. At that moment the wild thought came to me—perhaps it was the voice of a saint—that it might be possible for me to trick the demon. The thought at once pleased me and frightened me.

"Why do you wish to speak with the people?" I asked, making a great effort to conceal my true feelings.

"I wish to learn of your ways and to understand how you live. I am a writer of books. I wish to return to my own land and write down what I have learned here. Will you help me?"

In truth, the creature was devilishly clever with words. Though I did not yet have a plan, yet I agreed to lead the evil creature to my master's house.

"Thank you very much," the demon said. I could discern that it was pleased, may its evil soul burn everlastingly in the pit. "I am called Myra Hudson," it said. "How are you called?"

"I am called Hans, the Woodcutter," I replied truthfully, for it would have been useless to try to deceive the demon, for it is said that such beings have the power to enter the mind and read thoughts. "I will take you to the house of my master. He is a great and good man who has much wisdom and learning. He will be able to tell you many things. You may follow me." These things I also said.

"Thank you, I will," the demon said.

Though my legs were weak with terror and fear, yet I passed by the creature and walked in the direction of the master's house. As I passed the evil thing, I noticed that

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it was possessed of the fragrance of strange and wonderful flowers, doubtless another device for luring the unwary into the service of the Evil One. The creature followed close behind me.

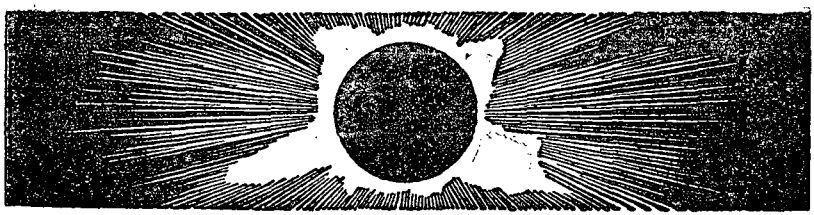
At length we arrived at a small stream which could be crossed only by means of a log which lay across it. At that moment a plan came into my mind. No, it was not my plan. It must have been the plan of a saint, or of my guardian angel, for I am but a simple man. In a calm voice, I asked the creature to walk across the log first. I dared not breathe as the evil creature passed by me and stepped onto the log. My head pounded with the rushing of thoughts. Could it be that the demon was really unaware of my plan? Or was it perhaps just testing me? Fear became a cold stone weighing down in my breast, yet I did not hesitate.

Having crossed myself, from my belt I silently withdrew my ax, which I keep as sharp as a knife. I rushed onto the log with my ax raised, and in my haste nearly fell into the stream below. The demon whirled to face me. I screamed and struck with all the strength of my body. I felt the ax crush through muscle and bone, though I know that demons are not formed as are mortals.

I shrank back in terror as the creature looked at me in surprise. Then, with my ax buried in its chest, it slowly leaned forward and plunged to the stream below. Unable to move, I watched as the demon's body floated downstream and at last lodged itself against a stone. Red stuff, looking for all the world like human blood, though, of course, it could not have been, poured from its wound into the clear water. The demon did not move.

At last I found the strength to run. I ran like a deer toward the manorhouse. Fear lent wings to my feet. At length I arrived, exhausted and weak. Yet a good feeling coursed through my body as I contemplated the deed I had done. My master will be proud of me.

When I have rested, I will go to the master and apprise him of what has happened. Then we will go to the priest. Then the priest will go and destroy the demon's body and drive away the strange object from which it came.



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doorway to heaven

by . . . Theodore Pratt

They didn't advise anything. It was up to people to make up their minds. But if they got tired, they'd be welcome.

AT FIRST John didn't know where he was and failed to be sure about what had happened, except he knew it was something drastic and terrifying. Whatever the place was where he had landed, it seemed to be nice, though rather misty, for you couldn't see far or very clearly in any direction unless you peered closely, when things cleared up a little, but not enough to distinguish any object, if there was any to see.

He supposed he had—well, that it had happened. At eighty-five, he knew he couldn't last much longer. And here he was. But where? There was no one else to be seen in the mist, which he now sniffed, and found quite pleasant. It was unlike regular mist, being dry, and it appeared to be faintly perfumed, in an unobtrusive way.

Whatever this place was he wondered if Martha had landed here. Fifteen years ago it happened to her. Her loss had devastated him. But he couldn't deny that there had been a certain relief in it, too, for Martha had been a Termagant, a shrew, and a nagger. Sometimes it got on his nerves something terrible. Once in a while he didn't think he

Theodore Pratt, who will be remembered for his earlier fantasies in this magazine, is the author of the recent HANDSOME'S SEVEN WOMEN *(Crest 35¢), based on stories that first appeared in Cavalier,* FLORIDA ROUNDABOUT *(Duell, Sloan & Pearce), and many other novels including his Florida Trilogy,* THE BAREFOOT MAILMAN, THE FLAME-TREE *and* THE BIG BUBBLE *(all DS&P).*

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could stand it any longer. It always made him mad when he thought of how she had changed from the delightful, wonderful girl he married to a mean and ill-tempered woman; it hadn't been fair.

He stopped thinking about Martha and her possibly being here when, out of the mist, there materialized, right in front of him, what looked like an office receptionist's desk, with a visitor's chair set in front of it. Behind the desk sat a very attractive young blonde clad in a white crisp nurse's dress with a pretty cap. She greeted him, "I'm sorry I wasn't here to receive you, John, but so many are coming these days I was busy elsewhere."

He stared at her. In his old man's voice, quavering still more because of the upsetting thing that had happened to him, he replied, "Well, I —why, hello . . ."

"Please sit down," she invited, indicating the chair at the desk.

He sat, rather weakly; he was still bewildered and confused.

The young lady told him warmly, "It's nice to have you here."

"W-where am I?" he wanted to know.

"Here," she told him pleasantly.

"But—where's here?" He was afraid to ask, but forced himself. "Is —is it hell?"

She shook her head and smiled in a way which seemed to say that almost everybody asked this. "No, it isn't anything like that."

Relieved, and hopefully, he inquired, "Is it—Heaven?"

She shook her head and smiled again. "Not exactly."

"Then what is it? Maybe Purgatory?"

She answered, "Because we want it to be all things to all people we don't have any official designation or name for it."

"Ain't so sure I want to be in a place that don't know what it is."

"Oh, we know what it is, John."

"What?"

She was more evasive than ever. "After a little while it won't matter to you what it's called."

"Well, it does now. I want to know where I am."

"You can call it anything you want, John."

"All right, then, maybe it's kind of—well, a doorway to Heaven?"

"That's as good as anything. I'm sure you'll get on to things here fast, John."

"Will I?" He wasn't so certain. "Say, I hope you don't mind my asking, but who are you?"

Gently she said, "I'm just here to make it a little easier when you arrive."

"But I thought—" He looked about. There were no pearly gates or gates of any kind. "St. Peter. . ."

"You see," she explained, "he wouldn't do for everybody. A Moslem, for instance."

He looked at her neat nurse's dress. "You would?"

"It was thought so."

He could agree with that. "What happens now?"

"Nothing."

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"But don't you take down my full name and address or anything?"

"What is your full name, John?"

"Why, it's—it's . . ." He couldn't think of it.

"Things like that don't matter here, John."

Testily, he informed her, "I'll remember it in a minute! I guess I know my own name, all right! It's . . ."

"Don't let it trouble you, John; we only go by first names here."

"Well, I expect you've already got it in your records."

"We don't keep any records."

"You don't?"

"There have been so many, John. And it was thought that if we once started to keep records we'd become a bureaucracy and people wouldn't like that."

"I guess they wouldn't."

"We try to keep everything as easy and free here as possible."

"Do, do you?" John was beginning to feel more confident, even a bit suspicious. "What about rules? You got any rules?"

"Well, yes, there are a few rules."

"Knew it!" he cried triumphantly. "Knew there was a catch to it somewhere. It's always the way. Something begins to look good, and it turns out it's too good to be true."

The young lady was not affronted by his burst of temper. As equitably as before she explained, "There are different sets, to fit each case."

He addressed her severely. "All right, what are the ones for me?"

"The first is that, if you want, we can make you feel young again. Please understand we can't make you look any younger than the time you decided to come here, but we can give you new arteries, a new heart, young muscles, things like that."

"Can, hey?"

"We can rejuvenate you in every way you choose, except in looks, if you care to be. Some prefer to stay as they arrive."

"Some do and some don't, is that it?"

"That's it, John."

He leaned forward in his chair, asking, "How many—?"

"Most do."

He sat back. "Thought so. Never believed people when they said they wouldn't be young again if they could—they only said that because they never had the real chance and knew they didn't. All right, that's a pretty good rule, but how about the others?"

"The second one for those in your category is that you can have your grandchildren at any age you want them to visit you and you can spoil them without anybody interfering."

"Say, that sounds all right, too." Something occurred to him. Worriedly he asked, "Except—nothing's happened to them? They ain't here, are they?"

"Nothing's happened to them, John, and they aren't here."

"But how can—?"

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"It's sort of a special arrangement."

"Not bad," he conceded, "not bad at all. Any more rules for me?"

"Just one."

"Bet this is the bug under the chip."

"I think you'll like it, John."

"Maybe I will, maybe I won't. What is it?"

"It's complicated, so I'll have to ask you to listen carefully. Maybe you've noticed it's a little misty here, making it difficult to see things. There's a purpose in that. You only see things you really want to see, John, that is, things you want to see very much."

"That so? It means you can see anything you want?"

"Anything."

"No matter what?"

"No matter what."

John thought that over, skepticism growing in him. "Well," he decided, "I don't like to go against you, young lady, but I just don't believe it."

"Why don't you try it?" she suggested.

"You mean pick out something and try to see it?"

She nodded.

"Now look here!" he stormed. "I'm just going to show you it can't be done."

"Please do," she invited.

"All right!" he declared. At first he thought of trying it on Martha, if she was here. But at the thought of it actually working he decided it was too soon for that. He informed the young lady, "Here's one that won't work: Is George Washington here?"

"Very much so, John."

"All right. I'm going to try to see him and when I don't—"

"Just look hard, John."

He looked hard. The mist, a few yards from the young lady's desk, cleared, and sitting about on comfortable Colonial chairs, he saw a group of people. They were clad in Revolutionary dress, including powdered wigs, and among them was a man clearly to be recognized as George Washington. He stopped talking with his friends for a moment and looked over and said, "Hello, John."

John was so startled and surprised that he half started up in his chair and stuttered, "Why, h—hello, George. I mean . . ."

George Washington waved in friendly fashion and went back to talking with his friends as the mist closed in again, shutting them all off.

John sat back again. He stared at the young lady. "Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "That was George Washington and I called him by his first name!"

"He expected you to, John."

"And he called me 'John' just as if he knew me!"

"Everyone knows everyone else here, John."

He reflected on his strange experience. "That's quite a rule you got there."

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"There's one more part of it you'd better know."

He waited, hoping it wasn't the bug under the chip.

"Only newcomers like yourself," she explained, "can look up other people. The ones already here can't look up those newly arrived. And if, after you've looked up someone, you don't want to see him any more, you just have to stop looking and he'll go away."

He asked, "What's the reason for that?"

"Well, it was thought that some people might not like to see others, if they happened to not care for each other before, or something like that. And if they did look up certain people and found it to be a mistake it could be rectified. There had to be some arrangement like that to control it."

"That only controls it one way, in favor of them like me, I'll admit, but only one way."

"It was the best we could do, John."

"You mean this place ain't perfect?"

She smiled. "We have a saying here about perfection, John, that goes like this: 'If there was any such thing, it would explode'."

John observed, with a chuckle, "You know, that's pretty good. But I've been wondering who is 'We'?"

"Oh, just sort of everybody."

"Are you saying there ain't—that is, any—?"

"I didn't say that, John."

"Well, then, who runs the place?"

"Everybody."

"You're beating around the bush."

"There aren't any more answers, John."

"Are you one of us?"

"In a way."

"There you go again."

"Do you think you know the rules that apply to you, John?"

"You told me all of them?"

"That's all."

He went over them in his mind. Contritely, he said, "Guess I shouldn't have sounded off the way I did about them."

"That's all right, John."

He thought of Martha again. "My wife, she—"

"We don't use the word you were about to use, John."

"All right, she—anyway, she left a good deal before me, fifteen years, when she was seventy."

"I know."

"You do? Then—I mean, is she here?"

"She's here, John."

"All I have to do is want to see her enough, and I could?"

"That's right, John."

"But it wouldn't work the other way—she couldn't want to see me and do it?"

"No, John."

"Doesn't she even know I'm here?"

"She'll never know unless you call her, John."

"Well," John admitted, "that's

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quite an arrangement, quite an arrangement."

She smiled her nice smile. "Some call it 'very interesting,' and others say it's 'quite a state of affairs'."

John wanted to know, "When a husband comes first, it works the other way, I suppose?"

The young lady nodded. "Then it's up to the wife."

"I'm going to ask you a question, young lady, maybe it ain't any of my business."

"You can ask anything you want, John."

"Of them like me, how many do and how many don't?"

"It's the same as before, John; most do."

"That so? What if a man, say, decided to get his arteries young again and not look up his wife but maybe somebody else?"

"That's his privilege, John."

He thought about that some more. "Supposing he does that and then decides maybe he'd rather look up his wife?"

The young lady shook her head this time. "I'm sorry, John, but he can't do that. A man in your age category can send other people back but not young girls—you see, it would hardly be fair to them. I forgot to tell you that once he makes such a decision he lives with it for the rest of time."

"That so?"

"That's so."

"Anything else you forgot to tell me?"

"Only that you don't have to decide these things right away. Look around for as long as you want. Later, if you want to be rejuvenated, look hard for me and let me know your decision."

Worriedly, John asked, "Does that rejuvenation—I mean is it kind of a bad operation?"

"It only takes a minute and doesn't hurt at all, John."

He was relieved but not sure at all about having it.

"Is there anything else you need to know, John?" the young lady asked.

"You going some place?"

"I'll stay with you as long as you like, John, but others are coming and I will be needed to receive them."

"I don't want to keep you, but what'd you mean before when you said people 'decided' to come here? I didn't decide anything of the kind."

"Don't you remember, John, just the other day saying to yourself, 'I think I've had enough. I'm tired. I wouldn't mind going now'."

"What if I did?"

"But don't you understand? You said that—and now you're here."

Slowly, he admitted, "See what you mean. But what about—well, somebody out and out kills himself, especially young? You advise such a thing as that?"

"We don't advise anything here, John, but let people make up their own minds. We think that a person should live out his natural life, but if someone gets that tired he's welcome here. Is there anything else?"

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"I'll probably think of a lot of things after you're gone."

"Then . . ." The mist began to close in on her. The chair on which John sat seemed to be evaporating, so that he had to scramble to his feet to keep from sitting down hard.

"Hey!" he cried.

Her voice was faint in the thickening mist. "Let me know about the rejuvenation, John." Then she was gone entirely.

John stood entirely surrounded by the dry, pleasant mist. There was nothing and no one else to be seen.

He stood helplessly for a moment. He felt lonesome and a little frightened. Perhaps he would call up Martha without thinking about anything else. Then he decided to look around a little first, as the young lady suggested. No use jumping into the fire first thing.

He began to walk. He wondered what it was like for old people, such as himself, here. To his surprise, there materialized a number of them. A tennis court appeared and playing on it was a very aged couple. At least they were in appearance. But they served, swung, and dashed about the court as though they were in their teens. The old man finally jumped over the net and nimbly ran up to the old woman and embraced her, tightly, and while she hugged him back, clinging to him, they kissed, fervently.

"Say!" John exclaimed to himself. If he and Martha could have a thing like that, possessing youth again to use with all the knowledge and experience of a lifetime . . . Then he remembered Martha's continual scolding.

He saw another old couple cavorting in a swimming pool in the same uncanny fashion as the first one played tennis. In quick succession, he saw a number of such couples at strenuous games that ordinarily would kill them in about five minutes or at least break a hip or two.

Another couple came into view. This time the man was quite old, John judged to be nearly his own age, while the woman was not a woman at all but a young girl, looking to be about eighteen. This couple sat glumly on a bench. Each stared at nothing without saying anything. The man's arteries might have been renewed but the great disparity in their ages prevented them from having anything of interest to discuss; stuck with each other they were just bored stiff.

Shaking his head, John walked on. Perhaps it didn't always have to be that way. Possibly a man could find a girl with whom he could have a good deal in common.

Still, he recognized the danger. And if you once chose a young girl you couldn't send her back.

Maybe it would be better to play it safe with Martha. But before calling her up, he would find out what she was like now. He'd ask somebody. But who? There wasn't anybody about.

He wished there was someone

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here he could ask and tried to picture someone. Instantly, in the mist a few yards in front of him, an elderly man appeared, who announced cheerfully, "Here I am, John. My name's Charlie."

"Say," John said, "thanks for appearing. How do you like it here, Charlie?"

"Couldn't be better," Charlie told him.

"Could you tell me a few things?" asked John. "I mean, like were you married back on—back there?"

"I was a bachelor, John. But I've found somebody here that's just right for me. Would you like to meet her?"

"Sure would," John said.

"Harriet," Charlie called, and then, beside him, a smiling woman of about his own age appeared.

"Hello, John," she greeted.

"Well—why, hello, Harriet," John replied. "I guess you like it here, too, don't you?"

With a fond glance at Charlie, Harriet corroborated, "Very much."

"I wonder," John asked, "if either of you know Martha."

"'Martha'?" asked Charlie.

"My wife."

Gently, Harriet informed him, "There are millions of Marthas here, John."

"Our last name is—is . . ." John dribbled to a stop. He saw, in a flash, what he was doing, which, in trying to find out in advance what Martha was like, was hedging. Then he understood at least one reason for the rule of knowing no full names here, to prevent what he was attempting.

Charlie and Harriet began to recede into the mist. "Wait a minute!" John called. "Won't I see you again?"

As they disappeared, their voices, in unison, floated back, "All you have to do is want to."

"One more thing!" he cried. "What is this place?"

But they were gone.

They were certainly a good example of keeping in your own age bracket. But John couldn't yet entirely let go of the other idea, especially because of not knowing if Martha had changed. He remembered a young girl of only seventeen in his neighborhood who had been drowned tragically last year. Her name was Gladys and she was probably here. He would like to see her.

Immediately Gladys stood before him in all her fresh young beauty. "John!" she cried.

It was startling to have her call him by his first name when always before, quite respectfully, she had addressed him as 'Mister'. Mister what? She might know.

"Gladys," he asked her, "what is my last name?"

"I don't remember," Gladys said.

"Do you know the name of this place?"

"Who cares?" She came up to him, quite close. "Am I glad to see you! I didn't think anybody would ever call me." She reached up soft round warm white young arms and

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put them about his neck, holding up her face appealingly and pouting her lips invitingly.

"Why!" he exclaimed.

"John," she whispered, "don't you like me?"

"I like you very much," he replied. He didn't confess that she also scared him. "But—"

"You mean because you're old and I'm young?" Gladys asked. "Don't let that worry you any. You can turn in your arteries for young ones." She held up her lips again.

It was a great temptation to lower his own on her glowing mouth. Then recollection of the glum old-young couple came to John and he managed to resist it. "I don't think—"

"Oh, John!" Gladys pleaded. "Don't send me back! Please don't send me back!"

Her arms, still about his neck, began to dissolve, along with the rest of her. As she disappeared, John reassured her, calling, "Somebody better will find you, Gladys—don't worry!"

John walked on. He knew he could put off Martha no longer. At least he would see what she was like now. The only danger was that, once calling her up, she might browbeat him so that he could never send her back.

He decided to take the chance. He pictured Martha.

And there, suddenly, she was, standing in front of him, the snip of little woman she always was, yet formidable in manner, with her arms crossed in disapproving fashion as usual.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "It's about time!"

John's heart sank. She sounded just the same. "Martha—"

"Don't 'Martha' me," she advised. "Where have you been all this time?"

He informed her evenly, "You know very well where I've been, Martha."

"Back there," she accused. "Enjoying yourself. Getting to be fifteen years older than I am. Look at you! What kind of a couple do you think we'll make this way?"

"We'd make a good one," he said, "if you—"

"Always blaming me!" she scolded.

"Martha," he said, "you're just the same, aren't you?"

"Why shouldn't I be?" she demanded.

"A little worse, if anything," he said, "because I can see you've got new arteries to give you more strength to complain."

"Now you look here, John—John . . ." She couldn't remember their last name, which was a blessing, for if there was anything John had disliked it was her habit of addressing him by his full name when she scolded, using it as though he were guilty of something.

"No," John said quietly, "you look here." He realized that he must take a stand now or forever hold his uneasy peace. The fear of her instilled in him before by her actions

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seemed to be removed here. "I asked to see you, Martha, because I thought you might have changed, become softer, more like the girl I married. But I see you haven't."

"Don't you say such things to me!"

"I'm saying them, Martha. And you know the rule here about my calling you up and sending you back."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Wouldn't I?" John smiled. And as he smiled Martha began to grow faint in appearance as the mist thickened about her.

Out of it her voice came frantically. "John! Wait! Wait!"

He waited. She remained static, fuzzy in the mist. "Well?" he asked.

Her voice was meek when she called, "John, I'll be good! I'll be different." She sounded scared.

"You sure about that?" he asked.

In a small voice she answered, "I'm sure."

"I don't want you spoiling things any more," he warned. "We could be happy here, like others I seen. There's a couple I met named Charlie and Harriet I think'd be good to know. And we could do such as seeing our grandchildren together, too."

"Yes, John, that would be nice."

"You were never one to be satisfied with what you had, Martha, such as having a thing like that. And me. But you'd have to start now being satisfied and happy about it and keep to it, all three."

"I'm already started, John."

"All right," he decided, "come on back all the way so I can see if you mean it."

She came back all the way. Her arms were no longer crossed in her scolding position. Her face seemed softer when she assured him with a new kind of obedient tone in her voice, "I mean it, John."

"Don't you forget," he reminded, "that I can send you back any time. And will."

"I won't forget, John." She looked at him in a way he could not at first believe, in adoration, just the way she had looked at him on their honeymoon.

He asked, "You want to see the grandchildren now?"

She came up to him and put her arms about his neck. "A little later, John," she whispered. "Right now I like you as you are, but I think you'll agree that it would be nice if you got your arteries fixed up first thing."

"Maybe," he admitted. He did not smile as he looked down at her, and before he did, he decided that things were very well arranged indeed here in the doorway to Heaven or whatever it was. Maybe Martha would know what it was, exactly, and then again it didn't seem to matter much any more.

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universe in books

by . . . Hans Stefan Santesson

Comments on the new books, novels, anthologies, conventions — and other matters which may interest you. . . .

THE late Cyril Kornbluth had many of the qualities seen by critics in his writings. He was witty and he was satirical, he could be sharply critical and, in the same breath (and this is rare) ready to admit that he might have been too harsh . . . I've known him to be very helpful to younger writers, starting out in the field in which he spent eighteen of his thirty-four years, and I have known him to be uncompromising in his feeling, in these final years, that sheer facility of expression (the ability to turn it on and turn it off at will, in other words) carries with it certain responsibilities and disciplines. Readers of this magazine will also remember his debate with Ivan T. Sanderson (REQUIEM FOR A SCIENTIST, *F. U.*, December 1957) where he took issue sharply with the noted zoologist who was then beginning his series of articles for us on the possibilities of the Ufological pattern, and with which Cyril frankly disagreed.

C. M. Kornbluth's THE MARCHING MORONS (Ballantine Books, 35 cents) reflects this thinking and this approach to the field, the ironic THE LUCKIEST MAN IN DENV, THE ONLY

Another report on some books of interest to science-fiction and fantasy readers — and on science-fiction fan activities and other matters which may perhaps interest you—it all reflecting the many-sided aspects of life and speculative thought in this field inadequately called science fiction.

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THING WE LEARN, THE COSMIC CHARGE ACCOUNT, etc. etc. Don't miss it!

Robert Silverberg's STARMAN'S QUEST (Gnome Press, $3.00) describes a world where, travelling at speeds close to that of light, spacemen live at an accelerated pace. A nine year trip seems to take only a matter of weeks but, when they return, their friends (such friends as spacemen have) and their relatives have aged, customs have changed, and even the language seems to have changed. Young Alan Donnel decides to stay behind, when the *Valhalla* blasts off, to hunt for his twin-brother who'd jumped ship years before and to hunt for the secret of what he insists is the Cavour Hyperdrive. The search, understandably, has its vicissitudes. And its rewards.

Frederik Pohl's STAR SCIENCE FICTION STORIES No. 5 (Ballantine Books, 35 cents), including stories by A. J. Budrys, Richard Matheson, Robert Silverberg, Dan F. Galouye's ironic DIPLOMATIC COOP, and others, is an interesting collection, as much for the underlying thinking reflected in the stories as for the writing.

John Brunner's THE 100th MILLENNIUM (Ace Double Novels, 35 cents) has many of the qualities which we have come to associate with the work of this talented young Englishman. There is an attention to background, a carefully etched portrait of an almost shattered civilization, that is regrettably unique in a field that has come to rely more on sound effects than on speculative thought. You may doubt the possibility of the world of Creohan and of Chalyth, but it *is*, nevertheless, a very real and vivid and very much alive world—alive in all its contradictions, alive in all its potentialities. And who *are* we to say what the world *will* be like in that distant future . . . Recommended. (The companion novel is David Grinnell's EDGE OF TIME.)

W. Gordon Allen's SPACECRAFT FROM BEYOND THREE DIMENSIONS (Exposition Press, $3.50) raises the possibility that extra-terrestrial entities using electrical space-craft propulsion are "all around us." The Book is described as "a challenge to conventional twentieth-century physical science to reconsider its 'proved' conclusions and to re-evaluate the atomic theory." This may be so, but, to be perfectly frank, I found this book by the founder and owner of eight radio stations in the Pacific Northwest (founder, also, of the Pacific Lemurian Society) to be *rather* confusing . . .

Readers who believe, as did the late M. K. Jessup, that we can bridge, under hypnosis or in our dreams, the long interval between a far gone yesterday—and these days—will find Nevil Shute's AN OLD

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CAPTIVITY (Morrow, $3.50) most interesting. The story of a flight to Greenland, at a time (the book was first published twenty years ago) when this was in itself a strange thing to do, it is also, in effect, the story of flier Donald Ross' coming home to the land and to the hills he had known—almost a thousand years earlier . . . Extremely interesting.

Donald A. Wollheim's THE HIDDEN PLANET (Ace Books, 35 cents) is a group of stories about men who find that what Venus has to offer makes "Darkest Africa" (to quote the publishers) "seem pale." I don't deny that there *is* considerable, and at times even exciting, adventure in these stories of Venus, as "seen" by Lester del Rey, Leigh Brackett, J. T. McIntosh, Stanley G. Weinbaum and Chad Oliver. Del Rey's THE LUCK OF IGNATZ is, of course, a minor classic in the field, while Weinbaum's THE LOTUS EATERS reflects a distinctly different approach.

Charles Eric Maine's recent THE TIDE WENT OUT (Ballantaine Books, 35 cents) presents us with a world where the veneer of civilization is shucked off because—faced, as the world is, by this man-made disaster—the veneer is a useless pretense.

Perhaps.

Donald Wollheim's other recent anthology, THE MACABRE READER (Ace Books, 35 cents) contains stories by Robert Bloch, H. P. Lovecraft, Thomas Burke, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard and others. It is not recommended for the easily disturbed, but certainly to those for whom "the concentrated essence of death itself" has no terror . . .

Howard Menger's FROM OUTER SPACE TO YOU (Saucerian Books, Clarksburg, West Virginia, $4.50) is a disturbing and extremely interesting book,—disturbing *and extremely interesting* because it raises, more plausibly than other literature in this field, the possibility that we have been visited regularly for some time and are probably being visited right now by teams of observers, both men and women, from other planets. Menger discusses, repeatedly, these contacts (pp. 29-34, 50-73, etc.) and the services he renders these extra-terrestrials*, who, understandably, are not at all anxious to stand out among the crowd . . . (If even the possibility that this can happen disturbs you, let me remind you that a lot of disturbing things *have* been happening in recent years, as science and reality have caught up with science fiction . . .)

Menger, I might add, is one of the most controversial personalities in the field of Ufology. *Controversial?* That's an understatement! Since his appearance, several times, on "Long

*Who *are* these aliens? They say they come from Mars, Venus, etc.

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John" Nebel's "Party Line" program on W. O. R. (listened to, nightly, by several million people), Howard Menger has been investigated, haunted and harried, called a liar by some of the people who at one time stood by him, and remained, throughout all of this, the apparently imperturbable personality that he was right in the beginning. Where the responsibility for apparent contradictions should be placed does not concern me at the moment; the man remains a personification—a controversial personification—of what has come to be known, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, as the contactee viewpoint.

I have made no bones about the fact that I have taken a rather dim view of many of the stories grouped together under this category. I do not necessarily question the sincerity of *most* of these people—please note that I underline the word "most"—but I do feel there is reason to believe that at least some may have been confused by or may have misinterpreted what conceivably happened to them . . . In my considered opinion, and without necessarily (as Long John puts it) "buying" his story *in toto*,—the Howard Menger story is in an entirely different category.

It is difficult, and I say this deliberately, to dismiss Howard Menger as any one of a number of things that he could be. Or to make, as former friends of his have done, forgiving comments . . . You have the disturbing feeling when you talk to the man, and when you listen to him, that he BELIEVES in what he says. And therein is the difference between him and some of the other personalities (I *can* think of a much stronger word . . .) also functioning in the field . . .

Where does this leave us? I am frank to admit that I don't know, but it does make for an interesting book as he writes (page 94),—

"The space people teach that the body is but a three-dimensional vibratory reflection or expression in the mind which the soul uses for a brief period on this planet. Most Earth people are prisoners of their bodies, while the space people control their bodies and other matter by use of the mind. They know and understand this to the degree that they can teleport themselves."

Or page 122—

"All of us have lived through hundreds of incarnations on various worlds. Some of us have volunteered to come to this planet and be reborn in earth bodies. We have volunteered to help in the work of helping other people receive the gifts of awareness. One can believe in these gifts on a purely intellectual level, defining the logic through rationalization, but believing is not knowing. To know a thing one must experience it."

And, departing from statements for which there are admittedly precedents—which does not, in itself, invalidate them—as he (page 100) flies over Venus,—

"I saw beautiful dome-shaped

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buildings, with tiers spiralling upward. The planet was fantastically beautiful. I did not get the impression of cities; instead, I was reminded of beautiful suburban areas I have seen on our own planet, though, of course, wondrously different. The buildings were set in natural surroundings with large trees, which looked something like our redwoods, and gardens stretching in every direction. Then I saw forests, streams, large bodies of water. People, dressed in soft pastel colors moved about. I also saw four-legged animals which were unfamiliar to me. Vehicles moved on the surface, apparently without wheels, for they seemed to float slightly above the ground."

FROM OUTER SPACE TO YOU, by Howard Menger, is, as I have said, a disturbing and extremely interesting book. Disturbing—if certain possibilities raised in the book are in fact so. Extremely interesting *whether or not this is so . . .*

By the time this issue goes on sale, the Detention Committee will be making final preparations for the 17th World Science Fiction Convention—which meets, as announced in previous issues, Labor Day weekend at the Pick-Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Mich.

This will be the first World Convention in three years within easy travelling distance of the Midwest and the East Coast, and a large attendance is expected. Fan groups in three cities—Phildelphia, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D. C.—have announced their intention to compete for the 1960 convention site. It promises to be a lively contest.

Guest of Honor this year will be Poul Anderson, (look for his "And yet so far" in the next *Fantastice Universe*), and Isaac Asimov has agreed to serve as Toastmaster at the banquet. In addition, at this writing it is virtually certain that among the notables present will be Frank Kelly Freas, E. E. Smith, Robert Silverberg, Marion Zimmer Bradley, P. Schuyler Miller, and Thomas N. Scortia, John W. Campbell, Jr. and this writer.

A number of panel attractions have been definitely placed on the program—one consisting of authors who began their careers in fan publications—another will discuss the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. In the planning stage as this is written is a playlet of the type that has been traditional at World Conventions for many years.

To join Detention, you have only to send your $2 membership fee (overseas memberships are only $1) to treasurer James Broderick, 12011 Kilbourne, Detroit 13, Mich. Detention meets, we say again, from the evening of Sept. 4th (Friday) through Sept. 7th (and it will seem like a lot longer) at the Pick-Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Mich. Anyone who's been to a World Convention will know what to expect. Everyone who hasn't should find out what they're missing.

Reg Bretnor, in the course of a

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letter to Judith Merril, quoted in Theodore R. Cogswell's *Publications of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies, Special Series* 127-A, asking why the decline in the field at a time when what SF outlined years ago is finally coming true,—

"What is this leading up to? Very simply, to the fact that science fiction should take itself, and its serious speculative aspects, a little more seriously. It should (*without* in any way diminishing its importance as good entertainment) emphasize its speculative role—its part in the intellectual adventure of our age."

I couldn't agree more!

News from New York!

Well—from these parts . . .

A tradition was shattered early in April, when, for the first time in the thirteen year long history of the Eastern Science Fiction Association of Newark, New Jersey, a woman was elected president of the group!

Belle C. Dietz was elected President. Frank Dietz was elected Vice President. And Dr. Christine Moskowitz was elected Treasurer.

The following weekend, the Lunarians, a New York group headed by Frank and Belle Dietz, held their Third Annual LunaCon. The one day conference honored Lester del Rey, who was presented with a plaque in recognition of his achievements in the field, other speakers including World Citizen Garry Davis, Avram Davidson, Randall Garrett, Sam Moskowitz, and others. Judith Merrill, Dr. Thomas S. Gardner and Don Bensen of Pyramid Books participated in a panel on sf in paper backs (this writer served as moderator) that was well received.

The Washington Science Fiction Association, hosts, in May, to a small invitational affair (attended by a number of people including K. G. Kindberg, publisher of *Hāpna,* the Swedish SF magazine, A. J. Budrys, Larry Shaw, this writer, and others) plan to bid for the World Convention at Detroit this Labor Day weekend. Chick Derry, Chairman of the CAPICON 60 committee, writes:

"As a safeguard, WSFA has set the CAPICON committee up as a separate group with funds and regulations concerned only with securing the bid at Detroit. A cash and carry basis with written records insures that if we get the convention it will at least be financially sound, and that is over half the battle."

"The Mayflower Hotel (which we have secured) is among the three top hotels in D. C., a city devoted to tourists. Every room is TV equipped, extra cots available, and if possible all bookings will be on one floor."

The members of the committee, as he points out (Bob Pavlat, Richard Eney, Ted White, John Magnus and the rest) are not "Johnny come latelys." They have all attended three or more conventions, are all FAPA members, and are in constant touch with the rest of fandom. "Everything that can

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be planned ahead has been done," he continues. "We are serious in our intention, and believe that a bigger and better convention can be staged by us."

The case for Pittsburgh in 1960 is made by Belle C. Dietz, President of the Eastern Science Fiction Association, in a personal letter:

"In the consideration of sites for the science fiction world convention in 1960, I feel that the bid being made by the science fiction club in Pittsburgh should not be overlooked.

"The group behind this bid includes such people as Dirce Archer, who is now engaged in the preparation of a huge, cross-indexed and comprehensive bibliography of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Fantastic Novels,* and P. Schuyler Miller. This is a farsighted group, for they have already made some plans for programming in the event they win the bid. Willy Ley would definitely take part, Frank Kelly Freas may conduct a science fiction art panel. Sam Moskowitz has agreed to speak (he will probably have some brand new color slides to show), and Lynn Hickman has promised to head up a fan editors' panel."

Mrs. Dietz quotes Sam Moskowitz as saying that the Pittsburgh club is "well qualified to hold a World Convention," and quotes their slogan,—"FOR A HIT, IT'S PITT IN '60!"

This writer *has* very pleasant memories of a week spent in Pittsburgh a number of years ago, *but* . . . .

See you in Washington in '60!

Talking of FAPA, I felt you might be interested in a brief article by Frank Dietz, dealing with the early years of the Fantasy Press Association (based on data furnished by Sam Moskowitz) which appeared in the May 1, 1959, issue of PEALS, a fanzine published by Belle C. Dietz. The article is reprinted here with the permission of Mrs. Dietz.

The science fiction fanzine has been around almost as long as science fiction itself. Credit for the first fanzine published goes to a New York fan group known as the Scienceers. With Allan Glasser as editor, the club produced six issues of a mimeographed publication titled "The Planet" in 1930. While this fanzine did not last very long, it did introduce the idea of the fanzine to the fans of that time.

Two years later, in 1932, fan publishing caught on. "The Time Traveller" and "Science Fiction Digest" were produced by some of the fans who had been active in the Scienceers. These and other fanzines were printed by Conrad Ruppert, who produced the most professional-appearing fanzines to be seen in fandom. In the same year

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two Cleveland, Ohio fans started publication of "Science Fiction", the first fanzine published outside New York City.

The fanzines of the early thirties were formal, with their editors trying to produce a magazine as close to professional quality as possible. The printed fanzines most nearly achieved this level, while many of the others suffered in the comparison. The material published during this era was all serious, and consisted mainly of club news, scientific articles, promag news, authors' biographies, bibliographies, pro and fan fiction and poetry.

Fan activity, and the fanzines, continued to grow until 1936. Then for almost a year there was a steady decline in fandom, which was particularly noted in the smaller number of fanzines being published. And fanzines were now almost exclusively mimeographed or hectographed, as one after the other the printed fanzines were found to be too much trouble to continue.

Fandom started to revive slowly in 1937. New names began to appear and new fanzines were published. But there had been some change in the attitude of the fans during the previous year, so that now the fanzines which were appearing contained more material about fandom and the fans themselves. The formal attitude had almost completely disappeared, and with it much of the serious material which had been popular previously. Printed fanzines were again becoming popular, although none approached the professional quality of the early thirties.

In 1937 the Fantasy Amateur Press Association was formed. At that time the membership was limited to 50 fans, which was more than the number of fanzines being published at the time. And many of the original members joined because they were talked into membership, or because they wished to get the fanzines, which were available only through membership. FAPA was a success, and contributed a great deal to an increase in fanzines publishing in the late thirties.

Fanzine publishing took a peculiar turn in 1938, with the formation of a large number of fan publishing groups. Individuals in these groups published a variety of publications, and occasionally the entire group would combine to publish a large single issue, which ran up to 60 pages. Most of these groups consisted of fans who lived in the general vicinity of one another, and they gradually evolved into local fan clubs, with their cooperative publications becoming the club fanzines.

Fandom and the fanzines continued to grow through 1939 and 1940, coupled with an increasing interest in science fiction by the general reader. The printed fanzines slowly died out, with the majority being published by mimeograph. The first photooffset fanzine appeared in 1941, with the publica-

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tion of the fourth issue of Science Fiction Times. It was in 1941 too that the term "fanzine" was originated by a fan named Ray Sienkowicz.

Fanzine publishing continued at an active rate during the war years, with the size of the issues increasing at a steady rate. And with minor setbacks this prosperity of fanzines has continued steadily to the present.

To turn, for a while, to space flight problems—a space cabin simulator capable of sustaining two men for up to 30 days without outside help will be delivered to the School of Aviation Medicine's new home at Brooks Air Force Base early this autumn.

It will be used by the School's Space Medicine Division to establish standards for the selection, training and indoctrination of future astronauts.

The Division is headed by Col. Paul A. Campbell, one of the Air Force's leading authorities on Space Medicine.

Under construction by a team of scientific specialists at the Minneapolis-Honeywell Corp., the cabin will contain two chair-beds, air and water purifying agents, and a complex system of controls that will enable the occupants themselves to adjust the simulated cabin altitude and climatic conditions.

The new cabin is a refinement of the school's one-man simulator that made world headlines last year when A/1C Donald G. Farrell spent a week inside it. This cabin is still yielding valuable information to school researchers, and will continue to be used after the arrival of the two-man cabin.

The new cabin will be 380 cubic feet in volume, approximately four times as large as the one-man cabin. It will reproduce all of the conditions of space flight except weightlessness and the as yet undetermined effects of cosmic radiation.

According to Lt. Col. George R. Steinkamp, Chief of the Division of Space Medicine's Department of Astroecology,* the two-man cabin will enable the school to plunge into investigations that will prove of vital importance in the future.

Colonel Steinkamp pointed out that the first man-carrying space vehicle will probably be a single-seater. "Due to the limitations of our rockets at this time," he said, "it is mandatory that the 'payload' —the orbiting portion of the rocket —be as light as possible.

"In the years to come, however, it is almost certain that vehicles capable of sending a two-man capsule into space will be developed."

By beginning research now into the problems of sustaining two men in a sealed cabin, the School's Space Medicine Division hopes to be ready with the data needed for the launch and orbit of a two-man space cabin.

*—in a release of the School of Aviation Medicine, USAF, at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

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In the cabin now being built, the subjects will "fly" the simulator themselves through "normal" and emergency space flight conditions which will be fed into the system from the outside. The hermetically sealed unit will have duplicate controls and a master override on the outside.

Most of the experiments within the cabin will be conducted at half an atmosphere, equal to the natural air pressure at a height of 18,000 feet.

Engineers consider that a rocketship cabin can retain this pressure without bursting in the vacuum of space. Doctors say that a man can get along all right with half his accustomed pressure.

One of the problems encountered in the tests made with the one-man cabin was the feeling of isolation the subjects had from being shut off from the outer world. Undoubtedly, the two-man cabin will serve to curb feelings of isolation somewhat. But new problems will arise —among them how well they adapt together in this situation.

To live together peacefully in such cramped quarters for prolonged periods, the two men selected must be highly compatible. Considerable testing and training will be accomplished before the men embark on their "flight." Subjects effective in the one-man simulator have said they would want to pick their own partners for the two-man capsule, according to Colonel Steinkamp.

Scientists watching the reactions of the two men from the outside via television will have improved techniques for the monitoring and recording of physiological data. This includes refinements in equipment used to measure heart beat, respiration, body temperature and blood pressure.

Every effort will be made to keep the two astronauts inside at peak condition. Their food will be carefully pre-selected to include their favorites and avoid their dislikes, since it has been found that diet is extremely important in maintaining morale. Drinking water, recycled from body fluids, will be readily accessible.

In some of the experiments the subjects will be provided with taped music and radio contact with the outside world.

But, despite these concessions, the men who enter the cabin will have their hardships. They will be completely sealed off from the world that they have grown so accustomed to. Time will weigh heavily on their minds, and boredom will become their constant companion. The familiar day-night cycle they live by will be lost. Though they will be able to stand erect and move about a bit in the new cabin, they will still be greatly cramped.

"The sun and the sky will be things of the past for the two men while they are in the cabin," said Colonel Steinkamp, "and 30 days can be a *very* long time."

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Garry Davis is, unquestionably, one of the most interesting personalities on the American scene today. Years before jets—and other developments—reduced distances between countries to a matter of hours, if not less, he was the personification of a way of thinking that held it was high time to think in global rather than national terms. He has several times said, at the Chicago World Science Fiction Convention in 1952 and, more recently, at the Lunarcon (see page 104) that his reading of science fiction helped to make him world-minded. With this in mind, some of you may be interested in a letter received from him as we went to press.

"It occurred to me that your mondialized readers might like to avail themselves of an exact copy of the World Passport which I used in travels throughout the past years. Out of an original printing of a thousand, there are perhaps two hundred remaining.

"The World Passport is 16 pages, bound like a regular passport, each page numbered, with seven pages provided for visas and other official stamps. When the bearer fills in the physical information required and signs the document before a Notary Public, the Notary can notarize his signature directly on the passport itself thereby making it," says Mr. Davis, "a legal document of identity. This function, as you know, is the original purpose of a passport. The World Passport, by its nature, identifies its bearer as a *de facto* citizen of the world and meets the fulfillments of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* with regard to the right of freedom of travel for all humans.

"Science fiction readers, however, will be able easily to recognize the *real* purpose of a World Passport—to regulate inter-planetary travel. If any of your readers therefore contemplate a voyage, one day, to any of Earth's sister planets, a World Passport is a must in the likely possibility of encounter with extraterrestrial beings Out There . . . and of course to re-enter the terrestrial community.

"The issuing fee is One Dollar, to cover printing costs," he concludes. "A passport size photo, and the fee, must accompany all requests. All correspondence may be addressed to me directly at 101 Central Park West, N. Y. 23."

Publication of the above does not, we hasten to add, necessarily mean that this magazine endorses Garry Davis and what he stands for. I think many of you will agree, though, that he has, in his activities and in his travels, captured the imagination of hundreds of thousands of people, all over the world, and made these people the more aware that we *are* a complex people, of many traditions and many dreams and many—views, and that we can, though we are a young people, produce (he was born in Maine) a man like this. . . . It would be interesting to know

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what Tomorrow's Historians will make of Garry Davis . . .

The fifteen-minute round trip into space of Able and Baker, who rocketed three hundred miles above the earth, at a maximum speed of ten thousand miles an hour—and were recovered alive—provided striking proof that mammals (and this includes man) can stand the enormous acceleration and deceleration forces during ascent and descent. They were the first animals *known* to have been recovered alive after a long-distance space flight. (Despite the statement by Yuri Khlebtzevich, originator of Project L-M-V (*Lunar-Mars-Venus*) that "the first *physical* exploration of the moon will probably be made between 1960 and 1965," quoted by Lucien Barnier in *SECRETS OF SOVIET SCIENCE* (Wingate, London) there is no confirmation of reports, published abroad, that later Russian experiments, subsequent to Laika's flight *have* been successful.

The first space trip will be easier for man than it was for the monkeys, though. Man can talk, and he will be able to report his reactions by radio during flight, while other devices will record his blood pressure, heartbeat, respiration, etc. At this time, however, three electrodes (a three-quarter inch square piece of silverplated stainless steel mesh with a silverpated copper wire attached), translating such body reactions as temperature, blood pressure and pulse into electrical impulses, radioed back to earth and recorded, were implanted under the skin of the monkeys. One electrode was in the right shoulder, the others above the left and right groins. Able was described as in good condition on their return, but a minor infection, caused by one of the electrodes, was noted. She died in surgery during an operation to remove the electrode, following the administration of light surgical anesthesia. Her companion traveller, Baker, a one-pound squirrel monkey (Able was a seven pound rhesus monkey) underwent a similar operation, with no complications.

Recovered out of the Atlantic, near Antigua, the two monkeys were taken from the nose cone aboard a Navy salvage tub and brought to Puerto Rico, where they were placed aboard a military transport plane and flown to the States. More than fifty correspondents attended the later news conference at the Space Administration's Headquarters near the White House, as the monkeys were brought before batteries of newsreel cameras and under Klieg lights. The monkeys were described as much less excited than the humans, who were shouting to attract their attention. They munched peanuts and crackers and —who knows—complained about the heat in the room, higher than in the capsule during the flight.

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the red hot deal

by . . . Joseph Farrell

This was a wretched planet —cold and damp! It was incredible that these natives had anything worth stealing!

LANDO the Vegan crossed his crimson legs and curled his red, barbed tail in his lap. He glared across the cave at Avaros, a dried-up little humanoid from Aldebaran XVI.

"You're damned right you'll make it worth my while," he rumbled. "It's worth a thousand measures just to set foot on this damp planet. Whatever kind of a confidence game you're working on the natives here, I want a piece of it. And if it's not good—"

He straightened his horns against his glowing skull, grinned evilly and blew a hot breath in Avaros' direction.

Avaros shriveled a little more. "You know me, Lando. And I really have a live one this time. One of the natives here, a great scientist, has lived past his time and is in his second childhood. He's become interested in what they call Black Magic, which means calling up devils and so on—"

"Devils? What're devils?"

"Well—" Avaros shrunk away cautiously. "They're evil creatures of supernatural powers and, don't be angry at this, Lando, but you Vegans fit the description perfectly. They

We've been hearing stories about golden-haired aliens from other planets, mostly from Venus (we don't hear much about the girls from Venus, though), all dedicated and wise Teachers of the Truths. But—what about the con-men from the other planets who must also have come here from time to time?

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live in a very hot place and their main pleasure is tormenting people—"

Lando wasn't offended. His bellowing laughter filled the cave. "Why, then there must be other Vegans on this planet. When the Vegan police catch me and encase me in ice, I'll have company!"

Avaros shook his head. "I thought so, too, but Melnick says no, there haven't been any devils around lately. They inhabit the hot interior of this planet and must be called up by certain spells. Melnick is working on a spell now and that's why I sent for you."

"To help you con this senile human." Lando turned up the portable heater and let a blast of sizzling air caress his skin. "What a wretched planet this is—cold and damp. How could the natives here have anything worthwhile? What are you after and what kind of bait are you using?"

Avaros patted a micro-scroll. "This contains the writings of one of my people who visited this planet a thousand years ago. He describes the primitive search for knowledge made by their alchemists and magicians. I came here in the hope that somehow they had achieved their goals—"

"What goals?" Lando belched out a sulphurous blast that drifted across the cave and made Avaros gasp. "Get to the point. I'm charging you by the hour for my services—and I'm not looking for overtime. Not on this freezing planet."

"They sought two things—a means of transmuting lead into gold, and the secret of eternal life. Either would be worth our while, of course."

Lando hooted and turned up his heater another notch.

"Why, you fool—what chance do the primitives have of finding such secrets? I've read that micro-scroll you have there—these humans have nothing but ignorance. Did you call me all the way—"

"Please, Lando. These people have progressed. Take a quick look around the planet, as I did. You'll see the cities and machines—great changes since this micro-scroll was scratched. And this scientist, Melnick, has told me that they've discovered one of the secrets—transmuting lead into gold."

"He's lying! A fine con man you are, falling for a tale like that. You're the one who'll end up being taken."

"He was telling the truth." Avaros displayed a small wiry instrument. "He let me apply this brain wave analyzer while he repeated his claim—and here's the reading—absolute proof he was telling the truth!"

Lando bent forward, interested, and Avaros shrank back from the heat.

"Then they really have a method of transmuting lead into gold! Why, Avaros, we really have something this time, old partner. But how do we get this senile genius to part with his secret?"

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"Well, it's not strictly his secret. I understand other scientists developed the process, but he has a copy of the formula. And the price he's asking is the other goal of the old alchemists—the secret of eternal life."

Lando scratched himself thoughtfully with the point of his tail. "Can we deliver? Or make him think we're delivering?"

"We can—with this." Avaros showed the Vegan a bottle containing a murky liquid. "This is a drug used on my planet—it's strictly against the law, but I know where to get things. It's used as an aphrodisiac—it'll make anybody feel much younger, even turns gray hair dark and puts a spring into stiff joints. We can let Melnick sample it and it'll pep him up good for a while—he'll be sure he's got the real stuff."

Lando stared curiously at the bottle. "The way you say it, it sounds like the real stuff. I'd like some of that for my own old age—if the Vegan police don't store me in the ice box first."

"The effect only lasts a few days—and the user will be worse off after, it's habit-forming and hastens death quite a bit, so stay off it. Now, here's what we'll do. Melnick won't deal with me because he won't believe I'm a real devil. What he thinks I am I don't know, but that's not important."

He leaned forward. "He's preparing a spell now to call up a real ding-dong devil who wants to buy his soul—"

"His soul—! Now, what possible use—"

"I know, Lando—so here's the way we'll have to work it. You tell him that I'm another alchemist from some other planet, and want to sell you my soul in return for the transmutation formula. You've already sold the formula for another soul and don't have a copy handy, so we make a three-way trade—you get my soul, he gets the elixir of life and I get the transmutation formula—"

"Icebergs and blizzards!" Lando cursed. "You're giving me a headache. Right here, above the horns. Go over that again, slowly. . . ."

Melnick, the last alchemist, hobbled happily about pouring the grayish powder onto the lines of the pentagram penciled on the floor of his desert shack. Once in a while he stopped to wipe off the drop of perspiration that kept accumulating on the end of his nose, and occasionally he peered into the ancient book that was open on the table.

"My goodness," he murmured happily to himself. "I do believe I'm going to succeed this time. It seems to be growing hotter, and I'm certain there's an odor of brimstone in this room."

Lando backed away from the window, fearing that he would be discovered too soon. He could hear the old man muttering inside.

"Hard to get real powdered unicorn's horn these days. But I think this is the genuine article. The fellow guaranteed it. And I know this

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is the blood of a chicken killed in a graveyard at midnight, because I went to the cemetery myself with it—"

The Vegan shivered impatiently in the blazing desert sun and looked over at Avaros. His lips formed the word:

"Now?"

Avaros shook his head and whispered:

"Not much longer."

The old man was chanting strange words. Lando had learned English by mesmertapes, but the language Melnick was using was not quite what he had learned. He listened, fascinated, to the sing-song of the alchemist's ancient spell. There was something hypnotic about the chant, and he stood listening to verse after verse of the weird incantation.

He became aware that Avaros was gesturing to him and came to attention. He followed the other to the door of the shack. There was a crash of a gong inside, and Avaros motioned him impatiently to the door.

Lando smashed the door open and strode imperiously in, as befitted a devil of the first water. The old man looked up.

"I've done it! You've come in answer to my call! But—" The wrinkles in his face deepened. "—through the door?"

"And why not?' Lando demanded. "We have doors where I come from."

The senile scientist still frowned. "Inside the pentagram. You're supposed to materialize inside the pentagram. But maybe there was something missing in the spell—some small thing. Main point is, you're here."

"How dare you call me up?" Lando roared, casting his best evil eye at Melnick, who cackled and looked unimpressed. "If it weren't that you have something I happen to need, old man, I'd burn you to an ash before you could wipe off that foolish grin!"

"Heh, heh." Melnick continued cackling, staring slyly back with his own version of an evil eye. "You'll pay a good price for my soul, Mister Devil—"

"Your soul be damned," said Lando. "Which it will anyway, deal or no deal. It's another soul I'm after. I've been trying to close a deal with an alchemist from another planet—" He turned to the door and bellowed. "Come in, Avaros, you monster from outer space! Don't waste time; I want to get back to my heated quarters. It's cold here!"

The temperature in the desert shack was crowding 120. Melnick mopped the end of his nose and watched in surprise as Avaros entered.

"So he was telling me the truth—he *is* from another planet. Thought all the time he was a crackpot escaped from Carrville—that's the asylum, you know—or maybe one of these science fiction writers looking for material. Never would have believed it—"

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"Well, it's true," Lando grumbled. "And he won't give me his soul unless I give him the secret of transmutation. So here's the elixir you want, old man. Now, I'll take the transmutation secret—"

"Heh, heh." The old man's claws snatched the bottle. His toothless gums worked in excitement. "That waitress down at Sam's Snack Shack—Dolores. You seen her? Wouldn't give me a look without laughing, but wait till I drink this stuff. And there'll be others." He sniffed at the liquid and suspicion appeared in his watery eyes. "How do I know you're giving me the real thing? It might be poison. Heh—pretty sharp devil, maybe."

Lando took the bottle away from him and pushed it into Avaros' hands.

"Show him it's not poison," he ordered.

Avaros unhappily lifted the bottle and took a short snort. Melnick, satisfied, did the same. While he had the bottle tipped, Avaros spat out his mouthful on the dirty floor where it wouldn't be noticed.

Melnick wiped off his lips with the back of his shirt sleeve.

"Is that enough?" he asked.

"Just about," Lando was shivering, but watched in interest.

Melnick clapped a hand to his chest as the fluid reached his stomach. For a moment he was panicked, feeling that it was poison, after all. Then he steadied, and began flexing his muscles expectantly. A dozen seconds passed.

"I can feel it going through my veins . . ."

More seconds passed, and the senile wrinkles in his face began to smooth out. He snatched a mirror from the trash piled on the sink and stared at himself. "It's working—!" He ran his hands over each other as the prominent veins subsided; then with a sudden pained expression, opened his mouth and tore out his false teeth. He fingered the sudden sharpness of the gums in amazement.

"New teeth coming through! It worked! It worked!" He started peeling off his filthy clothes, pulled a clean shirt and a pressed suit from the closet. "And my hair is darker. And most important of all—"

He made a descriptive gesture to Lando and started diving into the fresh clothes, "Dolores, here I come, and this time you'll notice me! A shave and haircut in town first, and then—boy, what a night this will be!"

Lando parked himself in the doorway. "You're forgetting something," he reminded.

"What's that? Oh, the formula." Melnick tore through a pile of old books and magazines, came up with a dusty volume. "Here you are. Page—ah, 127. The whole information. Sorry I must rush off, fellows. See you again sometime, maybe."

Something about his last words and the laughter that trailed behind him as he hurried out made Lando wonder who had made the best bargain.

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Lando huddled miserably in the cave, wrapped in a heavy blanket, shivering, his feet immersed in a bucket of boiling water. His heater was going full blast, and Avaros sat as far away as he could.

"Ah-choo!" Lando sneezed out a violent sulphurous sneeze. "I knew I'd catch something, standing around in that cold shack so long. Well, read the formula, Avaros. How do we turn lead into gold?"

Avaros was puzzling over the *"Quarterly Journal of the Brundage University Alumni Society of Atomic Physicists,"* his lips moving silently as he read through the difficult text.

"This article," he said, "is entitled: *'An Account of the Preparation of Certain Isotopes in Atomic Quantities During Transmutation Experiments at the Brundage University Physics Foundation Laboratory.'*"

"What does it mean?" Lando demanded, choking back another sneeze.

"Well," said Avaros, "I haven't finished it yet. Now, it says here, *E* equals *em see* squared . . ."

A week later the two were waiting near Melnick's shack. They stared grimly down the lonely road from time to time. The Vegan turned himself now and then so both sides could get some benefit from the portable heater. He swore bitterly.

"Icicles! He's not coming back. He's taken us, two of the best con men in the galaxy. If word of this ever gets out, Avaros . . ."

He stared thoughtfully at the other, and Avaros squirmed uncomfortably.

"I've waited long enough," said Lando. "Remember, I got your soul as my share of the deal. It's about time I separated it from your body. Nobody can do a thing like this to Lando the Vegan . . ."

Avaros reached frantically for his weapon, but he died in a burning flash. Lando walked over and let the theta ray pistol play on the body for several more seconds, enjoying the heat of it.

A motion down the road caught the corner of his eye. He squinted toward it.

"Melnick's car. So Avaros guessed right—the elixir is wearing off and he's coming back for the bottle he left behind. I'll just get under cover until I see if he's alone. He'll find he can't pull a fast one on Lando the Vegan. Transmutation! In atomic quantities! A process that costs a thousand measures of gold to create one measure!"

From behind the ancient barn he watched the car pull up. Melnick climbed out, walked a little creakily around the car and opened the other door. A woman emerged and stared at the shack. She was blonde and buxom and stiffly corseted and a bit past the first bloom of youth. Her jaw was determined and her air domineering.

"George Melnick!" she exclaimed. "Is this the romantic desert hide-

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away you've been telling me about? I must say I'm terribly disappointed. What a broken-down place and not a neighbor for miles! I think—" and her jaw became even more determined, "we'll be out of here soon and moved into town." She created a smile that was intended to be demure. "Well, George, aren't you going to carry your bride across the threshold?"

Melnick appeared to have lost about half the effect of the elixir. Lines were reappearing in his face and the erectness was weakening. He worked manfully to lift the woman. His eyes popped with exertion and his knees wobbled as he struggled into the shack with his burden.

Lando hurried over to the window to listen.

"You're looking awfully tired," said the woman. "Of course, you had yourself quite a ball this past week in town. Good heavens, this place is worse inside than out. We'll get together with a broom and a mop—get rid of this trash, like this bottle on the table—"

Lando chanced a look through the window in time to see the last of the elixir being poured down the sink. Melnick, a horrified look in his eye, tried to salvage the bottle.

"No, Dolores—no!"

"Why, George! It's only some vile old liquor. And you've had enough to last you a long time. Now, let's get the place in order, George—this is our first night as husband and wife. Our wedding night. Aren't you glad you waited, now?"

Lando peeked again and saw Melnick sitting miserably with his head in his hands. A sob shook the aging shoulders.

Lando strolled off, chuckling.

"Serves him right," he told himself. "Nothing I could do to him would punish him any more than he's getting now. What a woman! And the elixir worn off at that!"

Just as he rounded the barn there was a flash, a scarcely audible puff, and a spaceship stood before him. A slit appeared suddenly and two creatures who looked like Lando popped out of the ship.

"Vegan police," one of them explained. "We answered your call as fast as we could. What's the trouble here?"

"Uh—no trouble," said Lando uncomfortably. "The call was a mistake."

He reached suddenly for his weapon. The other policeman had been looking him over and Lando saw recognition suddenly break through the officer's questioning glance.

The policeman was quicker. Lando spread his hands in a gesture of surrender.

"It's Lando," the policeman who had recognized him told his companion. "Enough charges against him to put him in the ice mines for life."

Lando groaned. "It looks like a cold future for me. But how did you

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know? What brought you to this particular spot? What's that you said about answering a call as fast as you could?"

"We received a call to come here." The policeman slipped something over Lando's claws and motioned him toward the ship. "Funny thing—it was one of the real old-fashioned signals . . . the kind where they used to use powdered unicorn's horn and such things. . . ."

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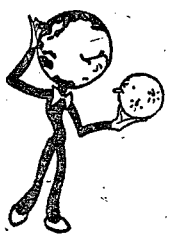

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the outbreeders

by . . . Calvin M. Knox

Clanfather had repeated, so often, the legends about the early days. It was a shock to now discover the truth!

THE week before his impending marriage, Ryly Baille went alone into the wild forests that separated Baille lands from those of the Clingert clan. The lonely journey was a pre-nuptial tradition among the Bailles; his people expected him to return with body toughened by exertion, mind sharp and clear from solitary meditation. No one at all expected him to meet and fall in love with a Clingert girl.

He left early on a Threeday morning; nine Bailles saw him off. Old Fredrog, the Baille Clanfather, wished him well. Minton, Ryly's own father, clasped him by the hand for a long awkward moment. Two of his patrilineal cousins offered their best wishes. And Davud, his dearest friend and closest phenotype-brother, slapped him affectionately.

Ryly said good-bye also to his mother, to the Clanmother, and to Hella, his betrothed. He shouldered his bow and quiver, hitched up his hiking trousers, and grinned nervously.

Far overhead, Thomas, the yellow primary sun, was rising high; later in the day the blue companion, Doris, would join her husband in

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Calvin M. Knox, author of LEST WE FORGET THEE, EARTH *(Ace Double Novels, 1958), is the pseudonym of one of the most interesting—and prolific—of the younger writers* (not H. E.!) *who, after only three years, is said to rank second to the late Henry Kuttner in the number of published SF stories.*

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the sky. It was a warm spring morning.

Ryly surveyed the little group: six tall blond-haired blue-eyed men, three tall red-haired hazel-eyed women. Perfect examples all of Baille-norm, and therefore the highest representatives of evolution.

"So long, all," he said smilingly. There was nothing else to say. He turned and headed off into the chattering forest. His long legs carried him easily down the well-worn path. Tradition required him to follow the main path until noon, when the second sun would enter the sky; then, wherever he might be, he was to veer sharply from the road and hew his own way through the vegetation for the rest of the journey.

He would be gone three days, two nights. On the third evening he would turn back, returning by morning to claim his bride.

He thought of Hella as he walked. She was a fine girl; he was happy Clanfather had allotted her to him. Not that she was prettier than any of the other current eligibles, Ryly thought—they were all more or less equal, anyway. But Hella had a certain bright sparkle, a way of smiling, that Ryly thought he could grow to like.

Thomas was climbing now toward his noon height; the forest grew warm. A bright-colored lizard sprang squawking from a tree to the left of the path, and fluttered in a brief clumsy arc over Ryly's head. He notched an arrow and brought the lizard down—his first kill of the trip. Tucking three red pinlike tail-feathers in his belt, he moved on.

At noon the first blue rays of Doris mingled with the yellow of Thomas. The moment had come. Ryly knelt to mutter a short prayer in memory of those two pioneering Bailles who had come to The World so many generations ago to found the clan, and swung off to the right, cutting between the fuzzy gray boles of two towering sweetfruit trees. He incised his name on the forestward side of one tree, as a guidesign for his return, and entered the unknown part of the forest.

He walked till he was hungry; then, he killed an unwary bouncer, skinned, cooked, and ate the meaty rodent, and bathed in a crystal-bright stream at the edge of an evergreen thicket. When darkness came, he camped near an upjutting cliff, and for a long time lay on his back staring up at the four gleaming little moons, telling himself the old clan legends until he fell asleep.

The following morning was without event; he covered many miles, carefully leaving trailmarks behind. And shortly before Dorisrise he met the girl.

It was really an accident. He had sighted the yellow dorsal spines of a wabbler protruding a couple inches over the top of a thick hedge, and decided the wabbler's horns would be as good a trophy as any to bring back to Hella. He strung his bow and waited for the beast to lift its one vulnerable spot, the eye, into view.

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After a moment the wabbler's head appeared, top-heavy with the weight of the spreading snout-horns. Ryly fingered his bowstring and targeted on the bloodshot eye.

His aim was false; the arrow thwacked hard against the scale-like black leather of the wabbler's domed skull, hung penetrating the skin for an instant, and dropped away. The wabbler snorted in surprise and anger and set off crashing noisily through the underbrush, undulating wildly as its vast flippers slammed the ground with each frantic step.

Ryly gave chase. He strung his bow on the run, as he followed the trail of the big herbivore. Somewhere ahead a waterfall rumbled; the wabbler evidently intended to make an aquatic getaway. Ryly broke into a clearing—and saw the girl standing next to the wabbler, patting its muscular withers and murmuring soothing sounds. She glared up at Ryly as he appeared.

For a moment he hardly recognized her as human. She was slim and dark-haired, with great black eyes, a tiny tilted nose, full pouting lips. She wore a brightly-colored saronglike affair of some batik cloth; it left her tanned legs bare. And she was almost a foot shorter than Ryly; Baille women rarely dipped below five-ten in height.

"Did you shoot at this animal?" she demanded suddenly.

Ryly had difficulty understanding her; the words seemed to be in his language, but the vowels sounded all wrong, the consonants not harsh enough.

"I did," he said. "I didn't know he was your pet."

"*Pet!* The wabblers aren't pets. They're sacred. Are you a Baille?"

Taken aback by the abrupt question, Ryly sputtered a moment before nodding an affirmative.

"I thought so. I'm Joanne Clingert. What are you doing on Clingert territory?"

"So that's it," Ryly said slowly. He stared at her as if she had just crawled out from under a lichen-crusted rock. "You're a *Clingert*. That explains things."

"Explains what?"

"The way you look, the way you talk, the way you . . ." He moved hesitantly closer, looking down at her. She looked very angry, but behind the anger shined something else—

A sparkle, maybe. A brightness.

Ryly shuddered. The Clingerts were dreaded alien beings of a terrible ugliness, or so Clanfather had constantly reiterated. Well, maybe so. But, then, *this* Clinger could hardly be typical. She seemed so delicate and lovely, quite unlike the raw-boned athletic Baille women.

A blue shaft of light broke through the saw-toothed leaves of the trees and shattered on the Clingert's brow. Almost as a reflex, Ryly sank to his knees to pray.

"Why are you doing that?" the Clingert asked.

"It's Dorisrise! Don't you pray at Dorisrise?"

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She glanced upward at the blue sun now orbiting the yellow primary. "That's only Secundus that just rose. What did you call it—*Doris?*"

Ryly concluded his prayer and rose. "Of course. And there's Thomas next to her."

"Hmm. We call them Primus and Secundus. But I suppose it's not surprising that the Bailles and the Clingerts would have different names for the suns. Thomas and Doris . . . that's nice. Named for the original Bailles?"

Ryly nodded. "And I guess Primus and Secundus founded the Clingerts?"

She laughed—a brittle tinkling sound that bounced prettily back from the curtain of trees. "No, hardly. Jarl and Bess were our founders. Primus and Secundus only mean First and Second, in Latin."

"Latin? What's that? I—"

Ryly shut his mouth, suddenly. A cold tremor of delayed alarm passed through him. He stared at the Clingert in horror.

"Is something wrong?" the Clingert asked. "You look so pale."

"We're *talking* to each other," Ryly said. "We're holding a nice little conversation. Very friendly, and all."

She looked indignant. "Is anything wrong with that?"

"Yes," Ryly said glumly. "I'm supposed to hate you."

They walked together to the place where the waterfall cascaded in a bright foaming tumble down the mountainside, and they talked. And Ryly discovered that Clingerts were not quite so frightening as he had been led to believe.

His wanderings had brought him close to Clingert territory; Joanne had been but an hour from home when she had met him. But he nervously declined an offer to come to the Clingert settlement with her. That would be carrying things much too far.

After a while the Clingert said, "Do you hate me yet?"

"I don't think I'm going to hate you," Ryly told her. "I think I like you. And particularly every time I think of Hella—"

"Hella?" The Clingert's eyes flashed angrily.

"The Baille who was my betrothed." He accented the *was*. "Clanfather gave her to me last month. We were supposed to be married when I returned to the settlement. I thought I was looking forward to it, too. Until—until—"

A wabbler mooed somewhere in the forest. Ryly stared helplessly at the Clingert, realizing now what was happening to him.

He was falling in love with the Clingert.

Ever since the days when Thomas and Doris Baille first came to The World, Baille and Clingert had kept firm boundaries. Baille had mated only with Baille. And now—

Ryly shook his head sadly. In the blue-and-gold brilliance of the afternoon, this Clingert seemed infinitely

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more desirable to him than any Baille woman ever had.

She touched his hand gently. "You're very quiet. You're not at all like the Clingert men."

"I guess I'm not. What are they like?"

She made a little face. "Much shorter than you are, with ugly straight dark hair and black eyes. Their muscles bunch up into knots when they draw bows; your arms are long and lean. And Clingert men get bald at a very young age." Her hand lightly ruffled his Baille-yellow hair. "Do Bailles lose their hair young?"

"Bailles never get bald. Clanfather's hair is still as blond as mine, and he's past fifty." Ryly fell silent again, thinking of Clanfather and what he would say if he knew what had taken place out here.

Not since the days when Thomas cast the first Clingert from his sight has this happened, he would probably intone in a deep sententious voice.

Ryly remembered a time far away in his childhood when a Baille woman had birthed a dark-haired son. Clanfather had driven child and parents out into the forest, and there other Bailles had stoned them. Ryly was not anxious to share that fate. But yet—

He scrambled to his feet. The Clingert looked at him in alarm. "Where are you going?" she asked.

"Back. To the Baille settlement."

There was a moment of silence between them. Finally, Ryly took a deep breath and said, "I'll return. Meet me at this place three days from now, at Dorisrise—I mean, when Secundus rises. Will you be here?"

Uneasiness glimmered in her dark eyes. "Yes," she said.

He reached the familiar Baille territory near nightfall the next day, having covered the outlying ground as rapidly as he could and with as few stops along the way as possible. He ducked back onto the main road around the time of Thomasset on Fiveday. He had had little difficulty in locating the tree that bore his name in its bark. Only the blue sun shone now, and it was low above the horizon; the moons were beginning their procession across the twilight-dimmed sky.

Ryly stole into the settlement on the back road. That route brought him past the crude little cabin which Thomas had built with his own hands as a place for Doris and himself to live, long ago when the first Bailles had tumbled out of the sky and settled on The World. Ryly quivered a little as he passed the dingy old shrine; the sort of betrayal he was contemplating did not come easy to him.

Above all, he did not want to be seen. Not until he had spoken with his phenotype-brother Davud.

A cat mewled. Ryly ducked into the concealing darkness of a vine bower, and waited. A stiff-necked old man passed by: Clanfather. Ryly held his breath until the old one had

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entered the Clan house; he slipped out of his shelter then, padded silently across the main courtyard, and ran into the open archway that led to Davud's cabin.

The light was on. Davud was inside, drowsing in a chair. Ryly tiptoed through the rear door. He sprang across the room in four big bounds and clapped his hands over Davud's mouth before the other had fully come awake.

"It's me—Ryly. I'm back."

"Mmph!"

"Keep quiet and don't make any loud noises. I don't want people to find out I'm here yet."

He stepped back. Davud rubbed his lips and said, "What in Thomas' name made you want to scare me like that? For a second I thought it was a Clingert raid."

Ryly winced. He stared intently at Davud, wondering if it were safe to tell him. Davud, of all the Bailles, was closest to him in physique and in attitudes, which was the reason Clanfather had designated them phenotype-brothers even though they had different parents. Among the Bailles, actual parentage meant little, since genetically every clan member was virtually identical to every other.

He and Davud were uncannily alike, though: both standing six-three, the Baille-norm height, both with the same twist to their unruly blond hair, the same sharpness of nose, the same thinness of earlobe. Ryly hoped Davud's mental make-up now was similar as well.

He poured a beaker of thick yellow bryophyte wine and sipped it slowly to steady his nerves. "I have to talk to you, Davud. Something very important has happened to me."

Ignoring that, Davud said, "You weren't supposed to come back until tomorrow morning. I saw Hella around Thomasset, and she said she couldn't wait to see you again." Davud grinned. "I told her I was enough like you to do, but she wouldn't listen to the idea."

"Don't talk about Hella. Listen to me, Davud. I went into Clingert territory on my trip. I met a Clingert girl. I . . . love her . . . I think."

Davud was on his feet in an instant, facing Ryly, brow to brow, chin to chin. His nostrils were quivering. "What did you just say?"

Very quietly Ryly repeated his words.

"I thought that was it," Davud muttered. "Ryly, are you out of your head? Marry that *filth?*"

"But you haven't seen—"

"I don't need to see. You know the old stories of how the first Clingert quarrelled with Thomas until Thomas was forced to drive him away. You know what sort of creatures the Clingerts are. How can you possibly—"

"Love one? Davud, you don't know how easy it is. The Baille girls are so damned big and brawny! Joanne is—well, you'd have to see her to know. The fact that Thomas and the first Clingert had some

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quarrel hundreds of years ago—"

Davud's face was a white mask of indignation. "*Ryly!* Get hold of yourself! You're talking nonsense, man—absolute nonsense. Baille and Clingert must never breed. Would you want to pollute our line with theirs?"

"Yes." Defiantly.

"You're mad, then. But why did you come back here to tell me about all this? Why didn't you simply stay with your Clingert?"

"I wanted someone to know. Someone I could trust—like you."

"You made a mistake in that case," Davud said. "I'm going to tell Clanfather the whole story, and when they stone you I'll be glad to take part. That's what they did the last time this happened, fifteen years ago, if you remember. When Luri Baille had a baby that looked like a Clingert. The line has to be kept pure."

"Why?"

"It—it has to, that's all," Davud said weakly. As Ryly started to walk out he added, "Hey! Where do you think you're going?"

"Back to the forest," Ryly said in a bitter voice. "I promised her I'd be back. I should never have come here in the first place." He was shaking and perspiring heavily; he realized that by this conversation he had effectively cut himself off from the Bailles forever.

"You're not going."

Davud grabbed Ryly's collar, but he pulled away. "Don't try to stop me, Davud."

Without replying, Davud gripped the fleshy part of his arm. Calmly, Ryly pivoted and smashed his fist into the face that was so much like his own. Davud blinked, bewildered, and started to mutter something.

Ryly stood poised indecisively for a second, watching with some astonishment the flow of blood from his phenotype-brother's broken nose. Then he turned and dashed through the doorway, out into the dark courtyard, and ran as hard as he could for the forest road.

He listened for the shouts of pursuers, but could hear none yet. He wondered if perhaps he had hit Davud too hard.

Ryly spent an uneasy night in the forest not too far from the edge of the Baille's territory; when morning came, he struck out at a rapid pace for the Baille-Clingert border. Joanne would be at the waterfall by Dorisrise—he hoped. For an instant he considered what would become of him if she had been playing him false, but he reached no answer.

The day grew warmer as he half-trotted through the forest, following the series of trailmarks he had left to guide himself. When he reached the trysting-place, it was not yet Dorisrise; Thomas alone was in the sky. Ryly sat by the water's edge and splashed himself to clean away the sweat of travel.

He heard footsteps. He looked up, hoping it might be Joanne. But it was Davud who appeared.

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"So you followed me?"

Davud nodded. "I had to, Ryly."

"And I suppose you brought the whole tribe behind you, all of them foaming at the mouth and ready to stone me." Ryly sighed. "I guess I didn't hit you hard enough, then. You woke up too soon."

Davud's nose was swollen and slightly askew. He said, "I came alone. I want to try to talk you out of this crazy thing, Ryly. Nobody else knows about it yet."

"Good. Now you go back and forget anything I said to you last night."

"I can't do that," Davud said. "I can't let you mate with a—a *Clingert.* I came to bring you back to Baille land with me."

Ryly clenched his fists. He had no desire to fight with his phenotype-brother a second time, but if Davud was going to insist—

"Get away from me, Davud. Go back alone."

It was almost Dorisrise time, now. Ryly hoped he would be able to get Davud out of the way before Joanne reached their rendezvous. But Davud was shaking his head stubbornly. "Baille and Clingert shall not breed. Thomas set that law down for us in the beginning, and it can never be broken. It is—"

He stopped, jaw sagging, and pointed. Slowly, Ryly turned. The first rays of Doris glinted blue in the flowing waterfall, and Joanne stood behind him.

"Which one of you is Ryly?" she asked plaintively.

Ryly unfroze first. "I am," he said. "This is my phenotype-brother Davud. He came with me to—meet you. Davud, this is Joanne."

"Is *this* a Clingert?" Davud asked slowly. "But—but—Clanfather always said they were *ugly!* And—"

Ryly began to smile. Good old Davud was a true phenotype-brother after all; his reaction to Joanne on first sight was identical to Ryly's. It was heart-warming to see him react that way.

Joanne laughed, her special Clingert sort of laugh that Ryly had already grown to love. "He seems stunned. Just as stunned as you were, three days ago. Do all of you Bailles think we're ogres?"

Davud sat down heavily on a rotting stump. His face was very pale by the light of the double suns; he was shaking his head reflectively, and seemed to be talking quietly to himself. At length he said, "All right. I apologize, Ryly. Now I see what you were talking about. *Now* I see!"

There was an over-enthusiastic note in Davud's tone of voice that irked Ryly, but he refrained from voicing any annoyance. "What about Thomas and his laws now, Davud?" he said. "Now that you've seen a Clingert?"

"I take everything back," Davud murmured. "Everything."

Ryly glanced from his phenotype-brother to Joanne. "I guess we have his blessing, then. If—if you're willing to become an outcast from the Clingerts, that is."

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Now it was Joanne's turn to look startled. "Outcast? For fulfilling the aim of the first Clingert?"

"What's that?"

"You mean you don't know."

Ryly shook his head. "I don't have the faintest idea of what you're talking about."

"When it all started," she said patiently. "When the spaceship exploded, and the Clingerts and Bailles were thrown free and landed on The World, hundreds of years ago. Jarl Clingert wanted to interbreed, but Thomas Baille wouldn't have any of it. He wanted to keep his line pure. So there hasn't been very much contact between Clingert and Baille since then, ever since the time the first Baille threatened without provocation to kill Jarl Clingert if he came within ten miles of—"

"Hold it," Ryly said. "It was Clingert who tried to kill Thomas Baille and marry Doris, but Thomas drove him off and—"

"No," said Joanne. "You've got it all backwards. It was *Baille's* fault that—"

"Let's discuss ancient history some other time," Davud interjected suddenly. There was a curiously pained expression on his face. "Ryly, do you mind if I talk to you alone a moment?"

"Why—all right," Ryly said, surprised.

They drew a few feet further away and Ryly said, "Well? What do you think of her?"

"That's what I want to talk to you about," David whispered harshly. "I think she's far and away above the Baille women. She's so—*different.* Gentle but not weak, small but not flimsy—"

"I knew you'd like her, Davud."

"Not *like,*" Davud groaned. "*Love.* I love her, too, Ryly."

It came like a blow across the face. Ryly's eyes widened and stared into the equally blue ones of his phenotype-brother. The Baille genes had been duplicated perfectly among them, it seemed. In every respect.

"You can't mean that," Ryly said.

"I do. Dammit, I do. How can I help it?"

"We can't *both* have her, Davud. And I think I have priority. I—"

Davud gasped and seized him suddenly, spinning him around. Ryly looked, shut his eyes, touched his fingers lightly to his eyelids, and looked again. The mirage was still there. It was no illusion.

He saw two Joannes.

"Ryly? Davud? Meet Melena. Melena Clingert."

"Is she—your sister?" Ryly asked hoarsely. The two Clingerts were, at this distance, identical.

"My cousin," Joanne said. "I don't have any sisters." She grinned. "Melena was hiding near the far side of the waterfall. I brought her along to have a peek at Ryly. I've always been a show-off about some things."

Ryly and his phenotype-brother exchanged astonished glances. An idea was occurring simultaneously.

"Of course," Ryly said softly.

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"We Bailles all look alike; why shouldn't the Clingerts? Three hundred years of inbreeding. Lord, they must all be identical!"

"More or less," Joannne said. "There are some minor variations, but not many. Most of the unfixed genes in the clan were lost generations ago. As probably happened in your clan, too. This was the thing that Jarl Clingert wanted to avoid, but when Thomas Baille refused to—"

"It was Clingert's treacherous ways that caused the whole thing," Ryly snapped. "Let's get that straight right now. Why, it's common knowledge!"

"Among whom? Among the Bailles, that's who—whom!" Joanne's eyes were blazing again, with the fury Ryly loved so much to see. "But why don't you listen to the Clingert side of the story for a change? You Bailles were always like that, shutting your ears to anything important. You—" She stopped in mid-breath. Very quietly she said, "I'm sorry, Ryly."

"It was my fault. I started the whole thing."

"No," she said, shaking her head. "I did, when I brought up the topic of—"

He smiled and touched a finger lightly to her lips. "Look," he said.

She looked. Davud and Melena had drawn to one side, standing on a moist, moss-covered patch of ground within the field of spray and foam of the waterfall. They were talking softly. It wasn't difficult to see by their faces what the topic of discussion was.

"We'll have to forget about ancient history now," Joanne said. "Forget all about what happened between Jarl Clingert and Thomas Baille four centuries ago."

Ryly took her hand. "We'll go somewhere else on The World," he said. "Start all over, build a new settlement. Just the four of us. And maybe we can recruit some others, if I can lure a few Bailles out here to meet Clingerts."

"And vice versa. The Clingert men hate the Bailles now, too, you know. But that can stop. We'll breed the feuding out."

Ryly looked over at Davud and Melena, then back at Joanne. Everything looked incredibly lovely at that moment—the angular red leaves of the overhanging trees, the white spray of the falls, prismatically colored blue and gold by the sunslight, the quiet green clouds drifting above. He wanted to fix that moment in his mind forever.

He smiled. His mind was still full of insidious Clanfather-instilled legends of the early days on The World as seen through Baille eyes. He could start forgetting them now.

Soon there would be a third clan on The World—a hybrid clan, both fair and dark, both short and tall.

And someday his descendants would be spinning legends about *him,* and how he had helped to found the clan, back in the time-shrouded days of the remote past.

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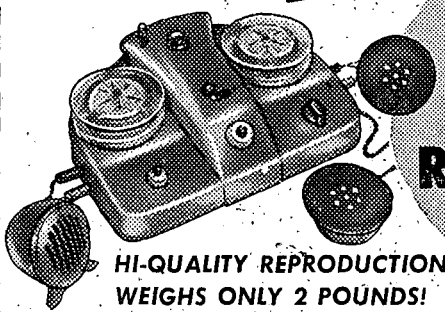

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